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"ACQUAINTANCE! OH, HEAVENS! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE!" CRIED ADDIE, FALLING ON HER KNEES BEFORE THE PROSTRATE MAN.

## LORD DUNMORE'S WIFE.

### [A NOVELETTE.]

#### CHAPTER I.

##### HAREBELL COTTAGE.

THERE was quite an assemblage of people on the lawn which sloped from the windows of Harebell Cottage, as Mrs. Melverton's place was called, and the bright June sun poured his soft warm rays on the chairs, tables, couches, drawers, and every imaginable article of household-furniture which was there displayed, amid the perfume of June roses, whilst men were still busily engaged in bringing out some of the more costly treasures to be viewed by intending purchasers, and those who had no intention of becoming such, as the auctioneer's hammer fell with the word "gone," when, one after another, they exchanged ownership.

From the lower room where the French-window opened to the green grass, an elderly lady was watching the proceedings with eyes which told of the sorrow with which she saw her household gods being taken from her.

By her side, endeavouring to comfort her, was a girl of maybe twenty summers, with one white rounded arm thrown round her neck, as she ever and anon made some cheering remark, to soothe the other in her distress.

"Never mind, mother," she said; "after all, they are only things we can replace at any time when the tide turns."

"Ah! my dear," returned Mrs. Melverton, "when the tide turns, but where is the prospect, my child?"

"Why, am I not young and strong?—and you know, mother mine, I am not quite a fool, am I?" and the girl laughed as she passed her hand over the silvery locks. "I can teach English, French, German, Italian; I can draw, play, sing, and paint, and it's strange if I can't earn enough to be able to keep a roof over our heads;" but the mother only

sighed as she thought how little such accomplishments would be valued, and still the buzz of the buyers and the sound of the auctioneer's hammer fell as a death-blow on her ears.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, what for this lot?" said the former, as they all fell back, whilst men in their shirt sleeves unfolded a large velvet pile carpet—£10!"

"£5," says a big, fat farmer, as he pushed forward to have a better view of the bargain.

"Lor', bless the man," says the auctioneer, "it wasn't bought for twenty, and is as good as new."

"I'll give eleven," and a gentleman of about thirty looked over the farmer's shoulder, so irritating that individual that he immediately shouted "twelve" in a rage.

"Thirteen," said the former.

"Fourteen," cried the farmer, to the amusement of the bystanders, as not until it had reached the twenties would he surrender the purchase to the other.

"Don't you know who he is?" asked one

woman of another, as the hammer fell. "Why it's Lord Dunmore of Linden Court, and he's bought most all—what for, Heaven only knows; but here he comes, so mum's the word," and the ladies had a lively bid, one against the other, for a box of odd crockery and kitchen utensils, as the object of their conversation passed on to the cottage.

He was exceedingly handsome, with laughing hazel eyes, which appeared greatly to have enjoyed the fight their owner had had for possession of the carpet, which was now being borne behind him to the house, and as he raised his hat in acknowledgment to the ladies, he passed the window where Addie and her mother were still seated.

A deep flush suffused the face of the young girl as Lord Dunmore went by, which had scarce faded from her cheek when a few minutes later he entered the room.

"Pardon me, Mrs. Melverton," he said, as he shook hands with both, "but I am come to ask a favour."

"A favour! my lord," replied the former, "I fear I have but few left to extend; what is it?"

"Well, in the first instance, I am going to ask you if you will allow the men to replace the carpet they took this morning from your drawing-room, dislodge the furniture which I have purchased in the several rooms to which it belongs, also—"

"But, surely, Lord Dunmore," Mrs. Melverton exclaimed, "you must be aware that I am no longer mistress of Harebell Cottage, and have no power to grant your request. To-night my daughter and I leave here for ever."

"Now, that is just what I don't want you to do," said his lordship. "You must know the cottage is mine, and the rest of the favour is, will you take care of it for me, well—until you are tired, and I must get someone else."

Mrs. Melverton raised her eyes to the young man before her, as a light broke in upon her.

"I know what it is," she cried, "but its just like you, my lord, it's just like you; how can I ever repay you? And so we shall not leave the old place, after all; thank Heaven! thank Heaven!" and she buried her face in her hands, as the tears gushed through her fingers.

"And have you nothing to say, Addie?" he asked, as he advanced to where the girl remained by the side of her mother; but her answer was inaudible, as a man now advanced to ask his lordship where the goods should be placed.

Mrs. Melverton had been housekeeper at Linden Court in the time of the old lord, and all through the stages of infancy, boyhood and youth, until he had arrived at his present estate of manhood, she had been the refuge in every scrape and trouble in which the son found himself, to which he flew.

It was Mrs. Melverton who was ever ready to screen him from his father's displeasure; it was Mrs. Melverton who would surreptitiously open the door and let him in after prohibited hours unknown to the household, although she ran the risk of being dismissed for so doing. She was a young woman then, and the living of herself and children—for she was a widow—depended on the situation she held; and not until the death of the present lord's father did she relinquish it to take up her residence in the cottage left her by his will, with her daughter for her companion, her son having obtained a situation as cashier in a merchant's office.

Lord Dunmore had never known his mother, she having died in his infancy, which made him more ready to rely on Mrs. Melverton for the motherly care or advice she was ever ready to give, until he never looked on her in any light but that of a friend.

He had seen but little of Addie until she came to live with her mother at the cottage, and then he straightway fell in love with her, thinking no one among the ladies of his acquaintance possessed half the charms of the girl whose simple ways and unadorned beauty, seemed to attract him far beyond the studied graces of his own clique; but notwithstanding that Mrs. Melverton had been housekeeper at Linden Court, all knew she was of the unfortunate class known as reduced gentlewomen, as it was through the in-

terest of a friend of the late nobleman, who in happier times had known the officer who had left a penniless widow, that she had been appointed to that post; and very happy and contented she was during those years of office, expending a large portion of her liberal salary on the education of her children, and to none was it more a puzzle than to Lord Dunmore how her present ruin had come upon her.

The summer's day was fast drawing to a close, Lord Dunmore had given orders as to where the re-purchased furniture should be placed; and had it not been for bits of paper scattered over the green lawn, none would have known that but a few hours earlier the quiet peace surrounding the cottage had been disturbed by the noise and excitement attending the sale.

"And so you will not tell me, Mrs. Melverton, how it was that you were brought to these unpleasant straits?" said his lordship, as he was increasing the gloss of his hat by rubbing the sleeve of his coat over the same preparatory to departure.

"You must forgive me," was the reply; "but ungrateful as it may appear, I must beg of your lordship not to press me to do so."

"Rather I must beg your forgiveness for my seeming impertinence," he replied, as, noting the tears which started to the eyes of both mother and daughter, he pressed the hand of the latter, and saying he would see them on the morrow, bade them adieu; and the shadows grew longer and longer in the deepening gloom, as with each busy in her own thoughts, they still silently watched, until the young girl, who had been retained till the last moment to wait on them, entered with the lamp, previous to laying the cloth for the evening meal.

"Is this yours, miss?" she asked of Addie, as she cleared the table, and handed the latter a letter which had been left on the same.

"Lord Dunmore's writing! Mother, dear, what can it mean?" asked Addie, as she excitedly broke the seal; and drawing it from its enclosure she read the following, whilst a crisp bank note for £100 fluttered to the floor.

"DEAR MRS. MELVERTON,—

"Don't be cross; having no use for the enclosed I thought it might be useful to you; it is but a small portion of what I am in your debt. Trusting with all my heart that you will soon overcome your difficulties, and that the sun will again break through the clouds, believe me, your true friend,

"GEOFFREY DUNMORE."

"He is, indeed, a noble fellow!" said her mother, as Addie, having finished the letter, picked up the fallen note and restored it with the letter to the envelope, when, replacing it on the table, she suddenly advanced to where her mother still sat by the open window.

"What was that, mother?" she asked, in a frightened tone. "Didn't you see someone?" And, following the direction towards which her daughter was looking, Mrs. Melverton could discern the figure of a man, as he appeared to emerge from the neighbouring shrubbery, and, rising fearfully, she was about to fasten the glass door as the same hastily advanced.

"Don't be a fool, let me in, quick;" and as the voice fell on their ears, suppressing the scream which rose to their lips, they again opened the window, as a young fellow of twenty-four entered the room.

His face was pale and haggard, the dishevelled locks falling over his white, broad forehead, beneath which his dark eyes gleamed with the despairing look of a hunted animal, whilst his tall, well-built form appeared to crouch with the dread of gulls.

"Quick, draw down the blinds," he cried, as Addie again fastened the window, Mrs. Melverton for the moment remaining seemingly paralysed by the unexpected apparition.

"Why, how do you do look?" he said. "Anyone would suppose I was a ghost! Here, come on, Addie, I am famishing. Get me something to eat, and don't stand there as though you were both struck dumb."

"One thing is certain, you are not," replied

Addie, "and why do you come here to add to the sorrow you have already caused?"

"Why, he repeated, "because I have nowhere else to go. Had you sent what I asked I would not have troubled you, but now it is too late."

"Too late, Outhbert. What is it you mean?" asked Mrs. Melverton. "Has it been discovered, then?"

"Yes, and the d—s are already on my track, I can't get away without money. Hark! what was that?" and hastily entering a cupboard by the fireplace, he closed it on him as a loud rattle resounded on the street door.

Momentarily he peered from his hiding-place.

"Keep them talking as long as you can," he said, as his mother and daughter hastened to the hall, where the little maid was in conversation with two men.

"It is useless to deny that he is here, madam," they said, as Mrs. Melverton, pale and trembling, endeavoured to assure them they were mistaken; whilst Addie, to whom this trouble had given courage, indignantly demanded by what right they dared to force their way into their house and at that hour.

"We are extremely sorry, young lady," replied one, "that our duty is such an unpleasant one; but here's our warrant, you see, and if you will allow us to go through the place we will not trouble you further," and closing the door behind them, they followed Mrs. Melverton and Addie to the room they had just left.

It was tantamount; they gave a professional glance around the same, advancing to the cupboard, as the excited flush which had dyed the girl's cheek vanished, leaving her white as marble, whilst she almost feared the beating of her heart must be audible to their quick ears, as they opened the door to find it empty.

The search throughout the little cottage did not take long, and, in a disatisfied and disappointed tone, the officers bade the ladies good-night, as there was nothing left them now but to watch without for the bird which had so far eluded their grasp.

Yet, Outhbert had fled—whither they knew not, but he was for the moment free, and Addie was about to congratulate herself on his escape, when a hasty tramp of feet without caused her to advance to the window and raise the blind just in time to see by the gleam of the moon the light, agile form of the youth, as like a deer he fled from his pursuers, until he was lost in the distance, and the latter appeared uncertain how to proceed, and then she turned to where her mother still sat over her untasted supper, and the hot blood again rushed to her face, as in vain she sought for Lord Dunmore's note. *It was gone.*

## CHAPTER II.

### A PROPOSAL.

LINDEN COURT, RIVERSDALE, was situated five miles distant from the cottage of the Mrs. tons. The house itself stood high, with broad terraces from which the velvet park, studded with beech and oak, sloped down until it ended on the banks of a small river, which gurgled and danced in the sunlight, reflecting in its silvery stream the branches of the linden trees which grew so near as to dip their leaves in its clear waters, on which the white swans sailed in all their majestic beauty; and it was here that Geoffrey, Lord Dunmore, lived under the care and surveillance of a maiden aunt, who had since his father's death usurped the mentorship over him, and up to the present had to the best of her ability prevented him from forming any tie which would be the means of displacing her from the position she had determined, if possible, to retain.

As to any chance of ever now having an establishment of her own, over which to exert her sway, had long vanished from the breast of the Honourable Miss Garthorne; she had long passed the meridian of age, and unpalatable as it was, she was obliged to swallow the fact that she was growing old; and being far from rich, composed herself by the assurance that she intended to make that old age as comfortable as she could,



and where could she better carry out her object than at "The Court."

She was tall, stout, and in her best days could never have been a beauty; and now, with a large, red face, from which her hair was drawn back and placed in a thin braid on the crown of her head, from the back of which the same process was continued, it was not a style that added to her latent charms, giving her more the appearance of a Chinese with his pigtail twisted up than anything else; and Geoffrey could not be blamed that at times he had a longing to see a more sylph-like form and a sweeter face at the head of his table than that of his most estimable and portly aunt.

"Is it true, Geoffrey," asked that lady the day after the sale, "that Mrs. Melverton's effects were sold by auction yesterday?"

"I believe there was something of the kind at the Cottage, aunt," was the reply, as Lord Dunmore assisted himself to some kidneys on the breakfast-table; "but who told you?"

"My maid," said Miss Garthorne, stirring her coffee; "what could be the reason? I should have thought after the liberal way in which your father provided for Mrs. Melverton at his death they might have steered clear of pecuniary difficulties, but some people are so imprudent; and if the girl had been the daughter of a peer she could not have received a better education, which I suppose accounts for the trouble in which her foolish mother now finds herself."

"How did you know anything of Miss Melverton's accomplishments, aunt?" asked her nephew. "I suppose from the same source most ladies gain county gossip, the maid again!"

"Not at all," and the Honourable Miss Garthorne shook the earrings in her stupendous ears with an offended toss of her head, "not at all. The girl was here herself a few days ago, asking me if I could assist her in any way to obtain a situation as daily governess in the neighbourhood."

"And what reply did the girl receive?" said his lordship, sarcastically, as he pushed his plate from him.

"That I did not keep a scholastic agency, and could in no way help her."

"Condescend, aunt, though not a very kind reply," returned Geoffrey. "Then I conclude she told you all she was able to teach?"

"She did, and I advised her to take a place as resident governess, but she said she could not leave her mother. But, now I think of it, Lady Darochie is in need of such a young person, I will send Barton with a note; it may be a charity, as you say they are in trouble," and Miss Garthorne looked towards her nephew for appreciation of her Christian-like feeling.

"Give me the note, aunt," said the latter. "I am going to ride this morning, and may as well go to Harebell as anywhere else."

It was but a short time after that Geoffrey was in the saddle, and the silky coat of his horse glistened in the fine sun as he cantered on in the soft, morning air.

"Suspicious looking individual that," thought his lordship, as drawing rein at the gate which divided the lawn of the Cottage from the road, it was opened by a strange man that he might pass through.

Addie and her mother were busily engaged rearranging the restored home, and never did Geoffrey think had he seen the former look lovelier than with the short-sleeved dress, which displayed her snowy arms, and her hair fastened with but a single pin, to keep it from her face, flowing in a shower of burnished gold down her back, as she replaced the pictures and treasured ornaments which had been only the day previous consigned to the hammer.

"Lord Dunmore!" she said, as she extended a little pink hand. "I am so glad you are come, for mother and myself could not have expressed on paper our gratitude for your beneficent kindness of yesterday."

"I did not call for thanks, Addie," he returned, with a look of tenderness in his eyes, "though I am happy to know it will do you good; but I was anxious to know how you and your mother were this morning. By-the-by,

you have not heard of anything unpleasant having happened in the neighbourhood, have you? for if I did not just now see a detective by your gate, as I passed through, I never saw one in my life."

"Oh! mother, what have you done?" cried Addie, as the alabaster figure Mrs. Melverton was dusting fell in fragments on the carpet, and as she stooped to pick up the scattered pieces, Geoffrey noted the hot colour as it rushed to her temples.

"Was it so very valuable?" he asked, forgetting the detective.

"No," answered the girl, "but it was my brother's gift from his first salary."

"Yes, my boy's present," replied the mother, and the tears stood in her eyes, as she carefully collected the particles.

"I am so sorry!"

"Never mind, mother," said Geoffrey, "your son will have plenty of opportunity to replace it with others," but with Mrs. Melverton a superstitious horror seemed to have overcome her, as, unable to restrain her grief, she left the room.

For some time Lord Dunmore still sat by the window where she had left him watching the graceful form of Addie, as she continued her work, in a silent sorrowful way, so unlike her usual manner.

"I think you might leave replacing that rubbish, and come and talk to me, Addie," he said at last; "I have a message for you from my aunt."

"I don't think I shall," retorted the girl. "Our household gods rubbish, indeed! I have no doubt they would be deemed that at Linden Court, but remember, Lord Dunmore, they are quite good enough for Harebell Cottage."

"No, don't be cross, Addie, dear," Geoffrey said, as, rising, he advanced to where the girl stood; "but I want you to sit down and speak to me, I won't keep you long." And passing his arm round her waist, he led her to a chair near his own. "You know I would not offend you for the world, the only household treasure on which I have set my heart; and I came to ask you this morning if you will give yourself to me, Addie, and let me thus place in Linden Court the chief ornament which it now lacks. You know, darling, there are many girls who, without conceit, would be glad to be Lady Dunmore, but there is no one I would place in that position but yourself, for I love you as a man loves but once in a lifetime. Tell me, Addie, will you be mine? My aunt commissioned me to bring you the offer of a situation as daily governess to Lady Darochie's children. I bring you, instead the offer of my heart and home. Tell me, darling, will you choose the latter?" He paused for a reply, watching the hot blood as it rose one moment, and then vanished, leaving her pale as marble as the words she would fain have uttered died on her lips.

"It cannot be! it cannot be!" she said at last, as he pressed her for an answer. "No, no! I must take the situation as governess."

"Do you not love me then, Addie?" he asked. "Love you! As we love life, Lord Dunmore. I love you so that no other can ever take place in my heart. I love you too much to be your wife."

"What do you mean, Addie?" he asked, as he drew her head on his bosom, and stroked her golden hair, whilst she let it rest there, as though unable to tear herself away from her transient happiness, thinking how those caresses would still be remembered when sorrow bore heaviest on her, how the impress of his fond kisses on her lips would still remain in her memory, when she took up the cross she had to bear, then lifting her blue eyes to his, speaking the love her lips refused to utter.

"You would never be forgiven, darling," she said, "for wedding the daughter of your father's housekeeper."

"I am my own master, and can choose my own wife, so let not that separate us. You are of gentle birth, and my equal, an ornament to adorn the home now waiting for you, and one I would treasure to my life's end. Addie! say it shall be!"

She lay for some moments in the loving arms

which enwrapped her in their close embrace, whilst a conflict of feelings rushed through her brain, the resolution to tear herself from him conquered by the great love which made the temptation too strong to resist.

"And you will take me as I am, Geoffrey?" she said at last. "You will love me and still trust me, if even in the future circumstances should arise which should shake your faith?"

"What do you mean, Addie?" he asked.

"There is one secret which must be mine—mine only to the end. It is not wholly in my keeping, therefore I cannot disclose it; but if it should come out, as it may do, will you love me still? It is no guilty secret in my own life. I never loved but you; you and you only, Geoffrey, have taught me what love is. Do you believe me?"

He was silent for some seconds, looking down into the pure innocent face he had pictured in his dreams, the face that had become so dear to him.

"Addie! my own! my darling!" he said, "I will trust you, and whatever this secret is its shadow shall never darken our lives."

And when Mrs. Melverton again entered the room, Lord Dunmore told her how that Addie had promised to become his wife, and her consent was all now he had to ask.

"But have you considered, my lord?" asked the former. "I was but housekeeper to your father; is my child a fit companion for his son?"

Mrs. Melverton was long in being convinced it was for the happiness of both that she had to sanction the alliance.

She knew the pride of the Dunmores, and as she told her daughter, when the latter referred to her own father having been an officer and a gentleman, "It is not what we were, my child; it is what we are."

And so Lord Geoffrey left Harebell Cottage the affianced husband of Addie Melverton.

The reins hung loose over the neck of Brutus, as, deep in thought, his master allowed him to walk leisurely over the dusty road.

The green corn, tinged with gold, waved to and fro in the summer breeze, whilst birds carolled their happiness in the branches overhead.

But Geoffrey saw, heard nothing, his whole mind engrossed in recalling the scene in Harebell Cottage.

What could this secret be which had threatened to overflow the bliss of two young lives? That Addie was innocent of any sin he felt convinced, or she would have hidden from him the existence of this bugbear; and the love he felt for her was so great, that had any whisper reached him that she was not worthy of that love he would not have believed it.

His aunt was reclining on the sofa in the drawing-room as he entered, fanning her portly form, the heat, as she declared, being enough to kill her.

"Did Mason tell you that someone belonging to the police has been here to see you, Geoffrey?" she asked.

"No, aunt," he replied. "The police? What could they want with me?"

"I don't know," returned his aunt, as she made a dash at a fly which for the last half hour had been endeavouring to light on her nose; "but you had better ring and hear."

"Tell Mason I want to see him," he said, as a footman answered the bell, and a few moments later a well-fed, fat butler made his appearance.

"It was a gentleman from Scotland-yard as desired to see your lordship," he replied, in answer to Geoffrey, "and he said he would return in the evening, my lord."

"He did not state his business?"

"No, my lord," returned Mason, "he almost, I may say, impudently refused to give any information whatsoever."

"That will do, Mason," replied his lordship. "When this man comes let him be shown into the library."

"Did you go to the Cottage, Geoffrey?" asked his aunt, as the butler left the room.

"Yes," replied Lord Dunmore, "but Mrs. Melverton will no longer require a situation."

"No!" queried the lady, as she again attacked the pertinacious fly.

"No," repeated her nephew. "She has consented to become my wife."

"Your wife!" screamed the Hon. Miss Garthorne. "Good heavens, Geoffrey, are you mad!" and in her excitement she forgot her insect antagonist, the heat at which she continually grumbled, the defective's visit, all but the peril which stood her in the face, which meant banishment from Linden Court, as her fan dropped to the floor, and she went into a fit of violent hysterics.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE BANK-NOTE.

To ring the bell for Barton, his aunt's maid, was Geoffrey's first thought, and when he consigned her to the care of the same, and the effects of the usual restoratives, he adjourned to the library to think over the events of the morning before it was time to dress for dinner. Vainly he endeavoured to shake himself from an apprehension of evil, which would ever present itself to his mind, in connection with the communication Addie had made to him that day, and which seemed to throw a shadow over the happiness he felt in her love; and although he never for a moment doubted her truth, still the shadow of this secret would at times veil the spotless purity of the being whom—he would have given half his life to know—had not a thought which she would have hidden from him.

His was no boyish love; he had outgrown all that. He had like other youths, in years gone by, fancied himself dying of love for a woman old enough to have been his mother, until her charms had faded in his eyes before a fresh divinity, whose complexion—as false as her words—held his heart but for a short space; till like a butterfly flying from flower to flower he at last grew weary of the chase—never until he saw Addie knowing what true love really meant, and that she was worthy of his love he could not doubt; no, not if he were told that she were false—he would not believe it, not until he had heard with his own ears, or seen with his own eyes the proof of her perfidy.

His aunt had recovered by the time dinner was served, and during the meal, owing to the presence of servants, the cause of the same was not alluded to; and scarcely had the dessert been placed on the table, and they were about to retire, when a loud knock on the hall door resounded through the house.

"Mr. Matthew Hart, Detective Department, Scotland-yard," was on the card, which Geoffrey took from the silver salver which the servant handed him; and to his inquiries receiving the reply that the man had been shown into the library, begging Miss Garthorne to excuse him, he wended his steps thither.

Mr. Hart rose as his lordship entered. He was a large man, with large red hands, and extremely large feet, for which his boots appeared larger still; his face was clean shaven, so as to allow of any disguise he thought proper to assume.

He wore a loose coat of a sea-side cut, with trousers and vest to match, a wide-awake hat, which he had removed from his head, in addition to a heavy-topped walking-stick completed his attire, with the exception of a massive gold Albert chain, which was attached to his watch, and a deep gold ring with a big white stone, which he wore on the smallest red finger of his large red hand.

"Be seated, Mr. Hart," said Lord Dunmore, as, motioning to a chair, he occupied one himself by the table. "I believe you wish to see me!"

"Yes, my lord," replied the detective. "Having been sent down here from London on the track of a young fellow who has absconded from the firm in which he was employed, leaving defalcations to a good amount, I sighted my bird last night, with the result that I lost him just as I hoped to have clapped my hand upon him," and Mr. Hart brought down the same on his knee as viciously as though it was the escaped criminal.

"But I don't see how this can affect me, Mr.

Hart," said Geoffrey, "or what I can do in the matter."

"Pardon me, my lord," replied Mr. Hart, in a professional and far-seeing tone. "We traced him to 'The White Swan,' where he again got the start of us by an hour or two, after having cashed a bank-note for one hundred pounds with the landlord."

"I am surprised the landlord should cash a note for so large a sum for a stranger," returned Lord Dunmore.

"That's just what surprised me, my lord. But it passed off when he told me he shouldn't have done so, but the note bore your signature, and he knew your handwriting well; and here it is, my lord," and he drew from his pocket a bank-note, which he handed to his companion, adding, "I should feel obliged if your lordship could remember when and to whom you paid the same, so that we may be able to sift the matter further, as it strikes me he must have accomplices in these parts."

"What makes you think so?" asked Geoffrey, scarcely knowing what he said, as he glanced at the number of the note—the same one he had given to Addie on the previous evening.

"Because me and my pal tracks him last night to a place about five miles from here they call Harebell Cottage, when he gave us the slip."

Then the pal was the man Geoffrey had seen when that morning he visited Addie and her mother.

"What is the name of this man?" he asked.

"George Hale is the name given by the firm, though he may have a dozen aliases for all we know at present," said Mr. Hart, as he did not fail to note the change which came over Geoffrey's face as he placed the bank-note in his hand.

"Well, I am sorry I cannot help you, Mr. Hart," said the latter, as he returned him the same. "That note has been endorsed by me, and is genuine, but how it came into the possession of your man I cannot tell, so I must wish you good evening. My servants shall have orders to serve you with refreshment in the housekeeper's room, and I hope you will not be long before you capture Mr. Hale;" and he rang the bell, which was soon answered by a servant, who escorted the detective according to his master's orders.

And Geoffrey sat where the other had left him, his head resting on his hands; he heard the policeman's measured tread on the stone corridor as he descended to the lower apartments, and, as in a dream, he again heard him telling him of the cashed note and the defaulter's escape.

"Was this," he asked himself, "the secret which Addie so carefully guarded? And what was this man, George Hale, that she should pay into his hands the one hundred pounds he had intended for the benefit of herself and her mother?"

The theory that the same had been stolen he threw aside, as had such been the case would she not have told him of her loss when he saw them in the morning?—whilst the fact that their home had been put up to auction confirmed his suspicions that the money was needed in some way to silence this man.

Miss Garthorne was naturally anxious to know the purport of the detective's visit, which her nephew studiously avoided disclosing to her, further than to quiet her curiosity by saying he was in the neighbourhood on the track of a young fellow supposed to be hiding in the district, and to ascertain if Lord Dunmore had seen anyone of the description given who might be in league with some of the servants at Linden Court, accounted for his visit, and the Hon. Miss Garthorne was satisfied.

She was not in the best of humours with her nephew, whom she considered was about to bring disgrace on the family name by marrying a girl so far beneath him in social position, and thus obliging her to find another home, as of course she would be no longer wanted at Linden Court, although such an idea was far from the intention of Geoffrey, who would never close his doors to his aunt so long as she did not bring unhappiness into his household, relying upon Addie's gentle temper to exercise its influence on the old

lady, who might in her way add to the girl's happiness.

"Addie," said her mother, after Lord Dunmore had left them on the day he had proposed for the hand of the former, "don't you think it would be better to tell all, and trust to his generosity, my child? He cannot blame us."

"No, mother, I know that," replied the former, "but I could not bear to tell him; besides, I swore to Outhbert that never should the tale of his guilt pass my lips. No, I would rather give Lord Dunmore back his promise than to ensure my own happiness, thus place his liberty in peril. No, darling mother, we have suffered much for his sake, and rather than betray him I will resign love, position, even Geoffrey himself, worthless as I know Outhbert to be, still he is my brother. Oh! Outhbert! Outhbert! that you were worthier of our love! and burying her face in her hands she gave way to the grief which for so long she had pent up in her bosom.

The sacrifice of their home, the theft of the note, which she knew no other hands but his could have taken, the dishonour which through him had been brought on their name, all this she would have borne without a murmur; but when, as now, her life's happiness was threatened through his misdeeds, she felt embittered against whilst loving him still, more grieving for her mother, whose whole soul was so entwined in him that when the story of his disgrace reached her ears it almost proved her death-blow; and on the morrow, when again Lord Dunmore came to the Cottage, her sad, pale face, with its tale of sorrow, so went to his heart that he could not bring himself to harp again upon a string the very touching of which he knew gave her pain.

That there was a secret she could not disclose might for a moment cause a doubt to arise in his mind; but as he looked into the depths of her dear blue eyes it was dispelled, and pressing her to his bosom he would tell her of the love which would make their lives a day-dream of bliss, as he vowed to cherish her to the end.

The Hon. Miss Garthorne had even become more reconciled to the match now that she knew she was still to remain beneath the roof of Linden Court, where preparations were in progress for the reception of its future mistress, upholsterers receiving large orders to refurnish such rooms as Lord Dunmore considered too shabby for his bride.

Three months had passed since that day when all the goods of Harebell Cottage had been scattered on its soft green lawn, and neither mother nor daughter had heard more of Outhbert, consoling themselves with the assurance that he had left the country, and trusting, by means of the money he had taken that night on which they saw him last, that he had begun a new and better life in another land; and so the last faint odour of roses had passed with the transient summer, the last golden sheaf gathered from the fields which but a few weeks before had been rich in their yellow waves, as the joyous bells of Riverside church rang out in the clear air, mingling with the report of the sportsman's gun that bright September morning on which Addie Melverton became the bride of Geoffrey, Lord Dunmore.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE CLOUD NO BIGGER THAN A MAN'S HAND.

It was the middle of November when Lord and Lady Dunmore returned to Linden Court, where the Hon. Miss Garthorne had not only given orders, but had seen that everything was in readiness for their reception, she herself meeting them at the door, her hair drawn tighter than ever from her large face, now blue with cold, as she stood on the step, whilst Geoffrey assisted his bride to alight, which she did into the fat arms of his venerable aunt, which almost crushed her in their fold as she welcomed her to her future home.

"But come in quick!" she said. "You must be perished!" as divesting Addie of her outside wraps, which she consigned to her maid, she led the way to the drawing-room, where a cheerful fire threw its ruddy glow over the surround-



ings, which everywhere denoted wealth and comfort.

The window leading to the conservatory, rich with tropical foliage, was open, from which the perfume of rare exotics entered the room, pervading it with their sweet odour, a coloured lamp of warm red throwing a rosy glow over the deep green leaves, whilst lights shaded by the same where held by chaste statuary within, the trickling of a tiny fountain adding a mystic charm to the whole.

In the room itself the same delicate taste prevailed, the black and gold furniture with deep crimson cushions standing on a carpet of deep green and gold fern leaves, round the room itself there being a dais of the same on a black ground; priceless ornaments peeped from within cabinets and covered ornamental tables, whilst works of the old masters adorned the walls.

Throughout the mansion the same faultless taste prevailed; the boudoir especially prepared for his bride a very marvel of taste and elegance.

And this was Addie's new home; and as she sank into the cushions of the sofa, which Miss Garthorne had insisted on drawing close to the fire, a sigh escaped her as the thought of the skeleton which even existed in this paradise recurred to her memory.

"You must be perished, child!" said Miss Garthorne, as she gazed on the lovely face of her new niece. "How long have you been on your journey? Did you have good weather crossing the Channel?" she rattled on without waiting for a reply, so anxious was she to make a favourable impression on the wife of her nephew, to whom she was about to give a long description of what Paris was in the time of the Empire; when Geoffrey, seeing the weary look which passed over the countenance of Addie, told his worthy relative that the former, being very tired, she would be glad to retire early.

"I think her perfectly lovely," she said on her return, after having consigned Lady Dunmore to the care of her maid.

"Then you do not consider my having married the daughter of our old housekeeper such a very dreadful thing after all, aunt?" said Geoffrey, as with his hands behind him, he stood with his back to the fire.

"It is a question I would rather not answer," replied Miss Garthorne. "You have made your choice, and Heaven grant you may never repent it!"

"And do you think I shall? Aunt, anyone would think you did to hear you talk!" and a shade of annoyance passed over his lordship's countenance.

"No, Geoffrey, I do not say you will, but you know, as well as I do, that you possess a proud and sensitive spirit, and you must be prepared to meet with alights from those in your own class who may consider your marriage rather *infra dig*. How will you bear them?"

"Very easily, aunt," replied Geoffrey. "Those friends of mine who do not consider Addie their equal will never meet with a welcome at Linden Court, for those who would slight a gentle lady, because she has known adversity, are not such as I would wish to be associates of my wife."

But true, as Miss Garthorne had predicted, there were few callers among the fair sex on Lady Dunmore, a fact not unnoticed by the latter herself, although such would have had no effect on Addie, had it not been for the blow thus given to the pride of her husband.

Her beauty only added to make enemies to her of those whose personal charms existed nowhere but in the chance by which their birth had attached a handle to their names, or a coronet on their brows, and so, resting alone on Geoffrey's love, which never failed her, Addie heeded not the insults thus offered her.

She would ride or drive, accompanied by him, to her mother's home, although no persuasion would prevail on Mrs. Melverton to return the visit.

"No, Lord Dunmore," she would say, when pressed by Geoffrey on that point, "you are very good to let Addie come to see me, but though you married her you did not marry her mother, you know."

Lady de Roche and her daughters were among those with whom Lady Dunmore had formed a circle of acquaintances, and the girls were loud in their praises of the young person whom Mrs. Garthorne had at one time destined to be the preceptor of their young brothers.

The cold dreary days had set in now in earnest, when speculations and plans as to Christmas festivities was the general topic of conversation.

Lord Dunmore, in furtherance of a custom which had ever been carried out in his father's lifetime, had determined that the ball which had always been given on Christmas Eve should be revived on that day, in this, his first year of wedded life; so Addie sent out invitations, whilst Miss Garthorne, at her desire, made the other arrangements, only those requiring a man's supervision being entrusted to Geoffrey, who, in his turn passed the same over to the butler, who was to see that no expense was spared to make the same a success. Mrs. Melverton, pressed by the aunt, at last consented to superintend what she so fully understood, provided she was allowed to withdraw to the quiet of that lady's room when her services were no longer required.

The Court was now plainly visible through the bare trees from the linden grove which skirted the river, looking like some fairy castle, as from each window shone forth a gleam of light on the broad terraces and wide expanse of snow which glistened and shone until it reached its very entrance door, from which a broad strip of scarlet cloth laid over its virgin whiteness extended to the carriages, as they drove up to unburden their lovely freight at the noble portal.

The strains of soft music fell on the ears of the guests as they were ushered through what appeared as a garden of flowers to the reception-room, where Addie, arrayed in a dress of silvery sheen, with scarlet berries nestling in the folds, and fondling in her snowy bosom, awaited her guests.

The Honourable Miss Garthorne was resplendent in black and gold, with a plume of feathers nodding from the braid at the top of her head, in the style of a funeral horse, which fluttered in a ludicrous fashion with every wave of an enormous red fan, which she kept most industriously in action.

Lord Dunmore in the centre of a group of gentlemen, ever and anon cast a glance of love and pride at his beautiful wife, whilst he could but ill conceal the mirth caused him by his aunt's grotesque appearance.

Sets were being formed for a quadrille, Sir Arthur Leslie, a very old friend of the host, begging the hand of Addie for the same.

He was a middle-aged man, his dark hair alighty tinged with grey—the only tinge which time appeared to have made in the years which passed over his head.

He had been a soldier, he told Addie, in his younger days, but had left the service now some years; and then he told her of the delightful balls he had attended in India, assuring her that was it not for the snow without he could almost fancy himself in India then—the scent of tropical plants, the soft trickling of water, with subdued glowing colours of the lamps, giving an air of Eastern splendour he had never seen elsewhere.

"Is it very long since you left the army?" said Addie, as the quadrille being finished, they wandered to the cooler rooms.

"Before you were born, Lady Dunmore, he replied, "I was with the 48th when they were stationed at Madras in 18—, when I came home on sick leave, and shortly after retired on the death of my father, succeeding to his title and estates."

"Did you know Captain Melverton?" asked Addie. "He was in the same regiment," "Milverton!" exclaimed Sir Arthur, "I knew him well, poor fellow. He died of fever. Why do you ask?"

"I am his daughter," she replied. "His daughter!" ejaculated the Baronet. "Lady Dunmore, your father was my dearest friend. He died in my arms, raving to the last of his wife and children, and can I at any time

be of service to his daughter, will you promise that she will command my aid?"

The hot blood rushed to the cheek of Addie, as thoughts of Outbert, and the trouble which she ever dreaded, he might yet cause her flashed across her mind.

"You are very, very kind, Sir Leslie," she answered, "and should I ever want a friend may I look to you?"

"It would be my greatest pleasure to prove to you how true a one I would be," he replied, as the strains of one of Strauss' waltzes falling on their ears they returned to the ball-room.

"Are you tired Addie?" asked Geoffrey, as he approached to where his wife sat by the side of Miss Garthorne. "You look so white."

"No, dear, but the heat is rather overpowering. I should like a walk in the conservatory. It is cooler there;" and linking her arm through that of her husband, they passed through the drawing-room to the spot where she and Sir Arthur had so lately stood.

"Sit here," Geoffrey said, as leading her to a seat he left her to bring some ice and lemonade. "I will soon be back."

He had scarcely passed through the window, when Addie became conscious that others besides herself were availing themselves of the cool air, as from the seat she occupied she could distinctly hear footsteps on the terrace without.

The windows were slightly open to allow the escape of the steam from the heat within, and as the voices drew nearer she fancied she distinguished her own name mentioned as two gentlemen in deep converse passed where she sat.

They stopped to light fresh cigars, unheeding the cold, as they appeared to admire the snowy landscape; and hiding low, so as to be unperceived, she strained her ears to catch the purport of their conversation.

"Well, I am sorry for Dunmore," she heard one say, "though she is as fair a piece of womanhood as one would like to see. I should not care to have a ——" —here the word was inaudible—"for a brother-in-law."

"But how was it you did not prosecute him?" asked the other.

"Oh! the game wasn't worth the candle. I kicked him out, leaving it for some one else to do."

"And don't you think Dunmore knows of it?" asked the first speaker.

"No, or he would never have married the sister," was the reply, "though it is only just that he should know; but I vote for going in now, it is deuced cold."

And Addie heard their retreating footsteps as Geoffrey appeared with an ice and lemonade.

"Addie, you are as white as a ghost. You have been dancing too much, darling."

And he sat down beside her, caressingly passing his hand over her sunny hair, as with a strong effort she controlled the tears which would have fawned have welled to her beautiful eyes.

But thankful for that self-control that came to her relief, she summoned up all the courage of which she was capable, none of the guests as they departed in the early morning light dreaming of the canker which was gnawing at the heart, as she bade them adieu, of the beautiful Lady Dunmore.

## CHAPTER V.

### A STRANGE LETTER.

THE ball was declared a complete success, and the following morning was the chief topic of conversation among those who had been present, and with none more so than Sir Arthur and Lady Leslie, who pronounced Lady Dunmore to be charming, and all the arrangements of the entertainment to have been carried out with the most perfect taste.

"Fancy, my dear, meeting in Lady Dunmore the daughter of our old friend Melverton!" said Sir Arthur.

"But are you sure, Arthur, she was the child of Captain Melverton?" asked her ladyship, as she toyed with the leg of a chicken.

"Of course," replied her husband. "I had it from her own lips. But why do you ask?"

"Because I understand from Mrs. Stonorton—strictly *entre nous*, you know—that Lord Dunmore had made a *mistake*, for which one day he would have reason to be sorry," returned the lady; as there was an ugly story about respecting a brother, of which his lordship was in entire ignorance—a tale of embezzlement, in which, up to the present, the culprit has succeeded in evading the law; but he may be caught at any time, when the *dénouement* will be something shocking to anyone of such a proud temperament as Lord Dunmore."

"Still, I do not see in what way he could blame Lady Dunmore because of her brother's crime; besides, it may not be true, Adela. You know people will talk," and Sir Arthur sipped his coffee which had become almost cold in the interval, whilst his wife continued,—

"Oh, it is quite true, Arthur, for the gentleman (a large merchant) in whose office he first commenced his dishonest career spoke of it last night, telling Mr. Stonorton that he merely dismissed him with a caution, since which, it appears, he obtained a situation by false representation, and finding his first attempt so easy again defrauded his employers, until discovery being imminent, he decamped, leaving defalcations to a large amount behind him."

"Where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise, and for the sake of his wife I sincerely trust Lord Dunmore will never know the truth," replied Sir Arthur, as, adjourning to an easy chair by the fire, he commenced his morning perusal of the daily paper, leaving his wife in deep meditation over the future of the denizens of Linden Court.

The months moved on, bringing with them no events to disturb the happiness of Addie and her husband, until the former, consoling herself with the hope that Cuthbert was reclaiming the past in one of the colonies, thought of him now only as a mourner would of the dear one sleeping his last long sleep beneath the green grass.

Mrs. Melvorton also shared the same feeling, though at times a voice would appear to whisper to her that he still lived, and the mother's heart still hoped on that she might again press her beloved one to her breast.

There were great rejoicings at The Court, as in the ensuing spring an heir was born to the house of Dunmore, for whose advent great preparations had been made under the superintendence of the Hon. Miss Garthorne, who was virtually more mistress than Addie herself over all that appertained to the Dunmore establishment.

It was a lovely morning in June when Lady Dunmore, seated by the open window in her boudoir, through which the air laden with the perfume of roses entered the room, with her baby on her lap, was thinking of the happy year she had spent since that day twelve months ago. She had witnessed the sale of her mother's home; and then, as her thoughts wandered on to the events which followed, they rested on Cuthbert, and as she gazed on the features of her little son she fancied she traced a likeness in the infant's face to that of her erring brother, and involuntarily the tears welled to her eyes, as she conjectured what that brother's fate might be.

She wore a loose morning wrap of azure blue, over which her golden hair hung in natural exuberance, forming, on the whole, a lovable picture as the door opened, and Miss Garthorne appeared.

"What nursing baby still!" she said. "You will quite spoil him, besides making Geoffrey jealous, who has made up his mind that you should have a ride with him this beautiful morning. But I quite forgot; here is a letter he gave me for you."

"A letter for me!" ejaculated Addie, whose correspondence was very limited. "Why, whom can it be from?"

"Well, let nurse take this little tyrant," said the older lady, as she handed the infant to the former, who now appeared, "and then you can see. It bears the London postmark," and Miss Garthorne, placing her gold eyeglass on her nose,

twisted and turned it about before placing it in the hands of her niece.

But as Addie's eyes fell on the handwriting the colour left her face, and a feeling of unaccountable fear took possession of her, the traces of which on her countenance she vainly endeavoured to hide, as she knew Miss Garthorne's far-seeing eyes were fixed upon her, and her hand trembled in breaking the seal, as her look appeared to penetrate to her very soul.

"Who is your correspondent, Addie?" she asked, as Lady Dunmore still sat with the unopened letter in her hand, and a look of pain crossed her features.

"An—old—friend," was the reply, the words coming in short gasps, as, rising, she placed the letter in her bosom, and then went to her room to dress for the morning ride.

The warm, sunny air of the June day could scarce restore her to her usual self, though she felt it a relief to be free from the scrutinising gaze of her husband's aunt, and more grateful still that he in no way alluded to the letter she had received; but, unlike her usual self, she was quiet and distant, and thankful when she was once again alone in boudoir.

It was then that, dismissing her maid, after having divested herself of hat and habit, her pent-up grief gave way, and the tears gushed through her fingers as she pressed her hands over her burning eyes; but the next moment a sudden determination seemed to take possession of her brain, and with a set purpose on her features she drew an escritoire towards her, and wrote,—

"DEAR SIR ARTHUR LESLIE,—

"I know not how to approach the subject which has determined me to take this step; but, as a ray of hope, your promise that you would be my friend should I ever be in need of such, has induced me to appeal to you in this dreadful trouble which has overtaken me, the greater that I cannot name it to Lord Dunmore. I am in pressing need of two hundred pounds until I receive my quarterly allowance. Will you lend me that sum, under the seal of secrecy, and thus ensure the everlasting gratitude of your unhappy,

"ADDIE DUNMORE!"

"P.S.—Please address to me, care of Mrs. Melvorton, Harebell Cottage."

And then she wrote to her mother explaining all.

"Let those letters be posted at once," she said, as her maid, making her appearance in answer to her summons, entered the room.

A bright flush was perceptible in the face which had been so pale in the morning, as Lady Dunmore descended to the drawing-room, whilst her eyes shone with an unusual brilliancy.

The Hon. Miss Garthorne was dying with curiosity to know respecting the letter which had had such a strange effect on her nephew's wife, but in tiny mites it had long been consigned to the summer's breezes, Addie wishing at the time she could thus have scattered to the winds the growing fear which was now making her hitherto happy life a misery.

Like a monster it had arisen at her feet, mocking and grinning with the agony she was suffering; whilst the dread that Sir Arthur might betray her added to the torture until it became unbearable, until, distrustful even of her own mother, she would not risk his reply passing through her hands, before he had time to answer the first, sending another letter, in which she begged him to meet her in the Linden Grove at dusk, when she would explain all.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE LINDEN GROVE.

"Do you know what is the matter with Addie to-day?" Lord Dunmore inquired of his aunt, as they sat over the dessert, the former saying she was going to the nursery, being the first to rise from the table.

"No, I don't," replied Miss Garthorne, raising a luscious strawberry to her mouth, "unless her letter brought unpleasant news."

"What letter?" asked his lordship.

"The one you gave me for her this morning," said his aunt, "which appeared to affect her greatly."

"Did she say whom it was from?" asked the former.

"An old friend, was all the satisfaction she gave me," was the reply. "But she has certainly appeared most strange since, although she has never alluded to the purport of it."

For a time each was silent, Miss Garthorne eating her strawberries, whilst her nephew remained deep in thought until the growing shadows without warned them of the closing day.

"I shall smoke a cigar on the terrace, you can tell Addie if she would like to join me," he said, as his aunt rose with the intention of adjourning to the drawing-room, but the latter was empty when she entered, and thinking Addie might be still with her baby, she rang the bell.

"Tell Lady Dunmore that his lordship hopes she will come down," she said, as a servant appeared. "She is in the nursery."

The windows were wide open, and Miss Garthorne could smell the scent of her nephew's weed, as he walked to and fro on the terrace, but the shadows grew deeper and deeper, and still no Addie, until, growing impatient, the former again summoned the man to whom she had given the message.

"My lady is not in the house, ma'am," he said; "and Barton says she saw her ladyship go towards the Linden Grove about an hour since."

Lord Dunmore, tired of waiting, now entered the room; as the servant closed the door behind him.

"So you wouldn't come, Addie," he was about to say, as he discovered Miss Garthorne to be alone.

"Hasn't she come down yet?" he asked, addressing the latter.

"Lady Dunmore is out," was the reply. "She was seen to go towards the Linden Grove an hour since. I should go after her, Geoffrey, if I were you."

"Strange," thought the latter, as he followed his aunt's advice, "that Addie should go alone, when she knew how he always looked for her to join him in his evening stroll, but as he told Miss Garthorne, perhaps she thought he had gone there it being a favourite walk of the two."

The pale moon had risen in the heavens, and the rustling of the leaves, in their gentle evening whispers was all the sound which fell on his ears, as his feet trod down the soft grass, in the shaded path leading to the Grove.

Nearer and nearer to where the silvery water rippled onwards he bent his way, until he saw approaching towards him the slight figure of his wife.

A light woollen wrap was thrown around her shoulders to protect her from the falling dew, and even in the dim moonlight her features appeared white, with a fear depicted on her fair face for which he could not account, as she hurriedly looked back, and then hastened towards him.

"You here, Geoffrey?" she asked.

"Yes, Addie; we thought you were lost; but how you tremble, child!" and he was about to draw her arm through his as the sound of hoofs in the distance caused him to turn to see, as they emerged from the Grove, horse and rider cross the bridge which spanned the stream.

"Who is that?" he asked, as he looked down on the ashen face beside him. "If I am not mistaken, whoever it is must have passed from the Grove."

"That is not possible," replied his wife, in a subdued tone; "it must have been from the field beyond; but let us get in, Geoffrey, I am getting so chilly," and she drew her husband away as the form of Sir Arthur Leslie disappeared in the distance.

She was so anxious that they should retrace their footsteps, feeling she was not safe until away from the scene of that evening's assignation, and she clung to her husband, fearing, dreading that he might suspect and wrongly judge her actions, fearing that even the crispness of the notes which lay in her fair bosom should bet-



her secret as she told him she had sought the river's edge to rid her of the headache which the heat of the day had occasioned her.

When they re-entered the house, the Hon. Miss Garthorne was awaiting them in the drawing-room, now all ablaze with the brilliant light of the chandelier; and whether it was fancy on her part, or the effects of a secret, which hung as a millstone around her neck, she knew not, but Addie thought her manner cold and constrained, lacking, also, the curiosity in her evening's ramble, so unusual to her husband's aunt, who generally wanted to know, as the servants termed it, the ins-and-outs of everything; and after one or two games of chess with Geoffrey, and a song, in which she failed miserably, Addie, pleading fatigue, told the latter she would rather retire, and as he rose to open the door for her she stayed for one moment, when fixing her eyes in a soft, pleading glance on his own she passed from the room.

The handle had scarcely turned and Lord Dunmore returned to the seat he had previously occupied, when Miss Garthorne took the gold eye-glass from the bridge of her nose, and fixed her gaze upon her nephew, as she was accustomed to do when anything particular was on the tapis. "Now, aunt, what is it?" asked the former, as he knew from previous experience what to expect. "You have something important to discuss, I know."

"I have a very unpleasant duty to perform, Geoffrey," she replied; "but I think it only right that you should be made aware that your wife carries on a correspondence with Sir Arthur Leslie."

"A correspondence with Leslie! What do you mean, aunt!" as for the moment he could scarcely understand the drift of her communication.

"Well, you need not shout," replied Miss Garthorne; "but to-day, Addie—though perhaps I had better not say anything about it."

"You have said so much," returned Lord Dunmore, savagely, "that you shall either satisfy or quell the demon you have raised in my breast. What is it you are driving at? On what grounds do you link Addie's name with that of Sir Arthur Leslie?"

"That she has written him two letters to-day," and Miss Garthorne heaved a sigh of satisfaction at having done what she considered was right and proper.

"How do you know!"

The tone now was quiet, as with his head resting on his hand, strange thoughts rushed through the brain of his lordship.

"Barton informed me, having been shown the same by your wife's maid, who was commissioned to see they were posted," Miss Garthorne replied.

"Of course I might have known it was the maid, aunt."

The tone was sarcastic, and not lost upon his worthy relative, who merely shrugged her shoulders, saying she had done her duty, although an unthankful one to perform; and called from the room, leaving Geoffrey as a mother might a child to whom she had administered an unpleasant powder.

He heard the door close behind her, as still he sat in the same position, his eyes fixed on vacancy, whilst his mind took in all that appeared so strange in Addie's conduct on that day. Oh, Heaven! could she be false to him! No; such a thought he drove from him as soon as formed. What was it between her and Leslie! Did he know anything in her past history she feared to disclose? And then he remembered the one page she had told him before her marriage that he could not read.

Then he recalled her moonlight walk in the Linden Grove, and the strange horseman in the vicinity, until he worked himself into a fever of imagination, pacing the room—he could no longer sit—as a caged lion, and the night sleep, as the stillness of death, had crept over the household, before he ascended to his wife's room.

The light had been lowered so as not to rest on her lovely face, innocent as a babe's, the long lashes resting on the snowy cheek, her golden

hair, in all its natural beauty, tossed from her fair forehead.

"I could as soon doubt an angel," said Lord Dunmore as he gazed on her in her gentle slumber. "Oh, Addie, my darling, my darling!"

Even in her sleep his voice appeared to fall on her ears, as with a deep-drawn breath she unclosed her weary eyes.

"Oh, Geoffrey, it is very late, is it not, dear!" she asked. "I must have been asleep."

"Perhaps so, Addie," he replied, and then he turned from the bed, scarcely daring to trust himself to speak, as conflicting passions strove for mastery in his bosom, gnawing at the very vitals of his heart.

## CHAPTER VII.

### AN UNHAPPY MEETING.

How woefully the long night hours dragged on, as Lord Dunmore vainly endeavoured to close his eyes, to forget in sleep the agony of his waking thoughts; and when he descended to the breakfast room, unrefreshed and sick at heart, as his aunt declared ill-tempered with everyone and everything but Addie, who had caused it all.

The latter appeared as usual, no trace on her features or in her actions of the occurrences of the previous day, causing Miss Garthorne to turn up her eyes in disgust at what she considered the levity of her conduct.

Lord Dunmore had previously arranged to join a party of male acquaintances for a day's fishing, and although he had fully intended to have had an explanation with Addie respecting her strange behaviour before starting on his expedition, when an opportunity presented itself he felt unequal to the task.

His aunt could not understand his conduct putting it down to the supposition that such had been arrived at between them, as entering the room, to which she had adjourned after breakfast, fully equipped for the day's sport, he told her he should not be home to dinner, perhaps not till late in the evening; and then he turned to Addie, who had followed him in, when, drawing her towards him, he kissed her tenderly, and a beseeching look came into his eyes, as he told her to take care of herself till his return, not forgetting to salute his infant son, whom nurse had just placed in her ladyship's arms.

"Mind you are good, young man," he said, smiling, as with one more adieu he was gone and Addie with her baby watched at the window until the dog-cart had vanished in the distance.

"I can't think what is the matter with Geoffrey this morning," said Miss Garthorne, hoping to draw Addie out. "He appears quite upset about something," and she fixed her eyes on Addie as though expecting to see a change on her countenance. "I do not think he was well pleased last night to find you alone in the Grove."

No! said the latter, the colour now tinging her cheeks. "He did not tell me so."

"It would have been better that he had," replied the other, "than that Lady Dunmore's conduct should be the gossip of the servants' hall."

Addie turned, this unexpected assault for the moment almost depriving her of the power of speech, her cheeks now ablaze, as she scornfully replied,—

"Lord Dunmore does not require his servants, nor would he allow them to be judges of his wife's actions, which he alone has the right to question."

"I did not mean to offend you, Addie," replied the elder lady, fearing she had gone too far, "but unfortunately, maids will talk."

"Possibly; but ladies are not compelled to listen. However, as you have commenced the subject, will you tell me in what way I have incurred the righteous indignation of my waiting-woman?" and ringing the bell, in answer to which the nurse appeared, Addie consigned the future lord of Dunmore to her keeping, and then returned to her seat by the window, to await the explanation of Miss Garthorne.

"I am sorry now I spoke at all," commenced that lady, "but as you insist I will tell you,"

And then she related how she was made aware of her correspondence with Sir Arthur Leslie, and the construction put on her strange behaviour of the previous evening.

"And you told Geoffrey of this?" she demanded, with blaming eyes.

"I thought it my duty to do so," Lady Dunmore, Miss Garthorne replied.

"And he thought me the guilty thing your story insinuated! Oh! Geoffrey, my love! my love!" and, burying her face in her hands, Addie sobbed out the grief she could not restrain. "No! don't come near me! Leave me!" she cried, as Miss Garthorne made an attempt to soothe her. "You have made me vile in his eyes, you have endeavoured to shake the faith he had in my honour, you have striven to lessen his love for me, and why! Oh, Heaven! why!"

As she spoke, her gaze wandered over the wide expanse of velvet sward, with the warm sun casting its shadows over the same, the gentle swaying of the trees, with a quiet murmur as they bent their branches to the soft earth, so in variance to the wild tumultuous feelings raging in her own bosom, like a mighty torrent tossing her hither and thither.

"What could she say to this woman?" How could she answer the imputations she had cast upon the integrity of her actions? And, worse than all, how could she refute the charges brought against her, and most of all to her husband? And as the thought that his faith shaken, his love would lessen, passed through her mind, the tears gushed from her eyes, as, with choking sobs, she passed from the room.

To be alone with her sorrow, alone with her aching heart, was all Addie asked, as she sauntered to her favourite seat beneath a spreading oak, where, shaded from the noonday sun, she could think, dream of the past, and speculate as to the future, whilst she blamed herself that she should have been so thoughtless as to have allowed those letters to pass through any hands but her, and to-night it would have been all over, her secret in her own keeping!

But as her thoughts again reverted to Geoffrey, a firm resolution appeared to take possession of her. Yes, she would see him first, before he had had time to see his aunt again, when she would confess all, and trust to his generosity; his anger she feared not so much as his distrust.

This last resolve appeared to give her consolation, as, in a dreamy state, she still sat as in her sleep, hearing the hum of insects and the songs of birds as they carolled above her head.

All traces of her emotion had vanished when, after a while, she joined Miss Garthorne at lunch, although she maintained a guarded reticence as that lady endeavoured to engage her in conversation.

"I shall not be home to dinner," she said; "I am going to Harebell, but shall return early. Let the carriage be sent for me at nine o'clock. Should Lord Dunmore be home before, he need not be uneasy."

But Geoffrey had not had a pleasant excursion. The shady morning had terminated in a hot sunny day, and the sport was bad.

"The fish will never bite, old fellow, if you keep dashing your line in as though you were beating for partridges," said his friends, whose chances of capture were thrown away by his impatience.

"You seem out of sorts to-day, Dunmore; anything amiss?" asked another.

"I am not very well," he replied, "and do not feel up to it," and, drawing his fishing tackle, he told them he would not spoil their fun, but would watch as they brought the fish to the surface.

And, as later on the sky became clouded, they had made a good haul, when the boats were drawn to the river's edge, and they landed, where traps were in waiting to convey them to Brickley Hall, the residence of Sir Joseph Ashton, who played the rôle of host.

"You'll stay to dinner, of course? What nonsense!" said the latter, as Geoffrey, pleading illness, begged to be excused. "You will be better after a rest, old man."

"Indeed, I must decline," he replied; "I

have been scarcely able to hold my head up all day; so you really must allow me to say good evening."

"It is too bad! But I suppose it can't be helped," Sir Joseph answered, as, shaking hands, Lord Dunmore seated himself in his dog-cart, and, bidding his friends adieu, turned his horse's head homeward.

Mrs. Garthorne was alone in the drawing-room as he entered, on his arrival at Linden Court.

"Home already, Geoffrey!" she exclaimed, "I did not expect you till late."

"No! But I was not very well, so preferred dining at home. 'Where is Addie?' he asked.

"Gone to Mrs. Melverton's," was the reply. "The carriage is ordered to fetch her at nine o'clock."

"I will go for her myself," he answered, taking his watch from his pocket; "It is now half-past six; give orders to have dinner ready as soon as possible. I will dress at once. You need not counter-order the carriage," as, rising from the table where his aunt was still enjoying her dessert, he said he should walk over to Harbottle.

The church clock had just struck eight as Lord Dunmore crossed the last field which led to the cottage.

The gnats flew before, dancing in their delight at the prospect of the fine weather they denoted; the birds overhead were chanting their evening hymns to their mates as they nestled in the branches.

The soft quietude of the hour was in unison with his thoughts; and he rested on the gate leading to Mrs. Melverton's, to enjoy the reigning stillness around, when two figures, as they passed close to where he stood, shaded from view by the shrubbery which divided the Cottage grounds from the main road, attracted his attention; and moving to where a gap in the hedge disclosed them distinctly, he saw Addie in deep conversation with a stranger.

He could see the face of the latter, as it was bent towards that of his wife. It was a handsome face, and a dark moustache covered the upper lip; his eyes which were raised for a moment, were of a dark hazel, but bearing an expression of recklessness, which told the character of their owner.

"Are you not coming up to the Cottage?" he heard Addie ask, as her companion looked down, evidently at the shabbiness of his attire, when he answered,--

"Not like this, Addie; never again until I can enter the same as an honest man."

"An honest man!" Lady Dunmore replied, "and when will that be! Oh! if you had known what it has cost me to get you this, I think even you would strive to lead a better life. It is the last I can do for you, Cuthbert; from this day seek not to see me."

"Then you do not love me, Addie?" he asked.

"Love you! how can you ask such a question? Have I not risked home, detection, everything for your sake; and then you ask me if I love you!" and Lord Dunmore could faintly see the beautiful eyes raised to those of the stranger, as the latter placed his arm around the form of his wife; then, taking something from her bosom, she gave it into the hands of the other, as she continued, "Take them, Cuthbert, it is one more chance; for my sake do not waste it." And as he placed the packet in his breast he stooped as though to impress a kiss on the lips of the girl, when a blow struck him to the earth, and Lord Dunmore stood before them.

"Geoffrey! Oh, heavens! what have you done!" cried Addie; as falling on her knees beside the prostrate man she looked on the features, white as those of death; whilst the former, his arms folded across his breast, and eyes blazing with the fire of jealousy, regarded the scene before him.

"Yes; what have I done, madam!" he repeated. "I have been witness of what you thought, taking advantage of my absence would never come to my knowledge. I have seen that which from others I would never have

believed; I have proved you unworthy of the name you bear; I—"

"Hush, hush! Geoffrey," she replied, as she still knelt by the side of the fallen man, who yet showed no signs of returning consciousness; "you do not know what it is you say."

"Tell me, then, who is this man, to whom you grant clandestine meetings, for whom you avow a love which should be mine alone."

But for the moment Addie heard not what he said, as bending to catch the faint sound which escaped from the other's lips she called him by name.

"Who is this man!" again asked Lord Dunmore, as he regarded the strange scene before him; and as Addie still remained silent, her whole thought centred on the prostrate form, the latter made a sign that Geoffrey should approach.

"I think you have about done for me," he said; as, in attempting to rise, the blood flowed from a wound at the back of his head, where the same had come in contact with a sharp stone; "not that my life is worth much, but she loved me, poor Addie."

"Who are you, then?" asked Lord Dunmore.

"I—am—her—brother," and again a faintness overcoming him, he fell back on the ground.

For the second, Lord Dunmore appeared deprived of all power of action, as moving to the side of his wife he alone endeavoured to appease her grief, as her tears fell on the white face of Cuthbert.

"Go to the Cottage and tell mother to send help," but as the sound of wheels were heard approaching, another thought entered her mind, and she asked him to stop the carriage which was approaching to convey her home before it proceeded up the drive.

"She must not know yet. May I take him home with us, Geoffrey!" she asked, as once more he showed signs of returning life; and she tied her handkerchief around his head, whilst the former, assisting him to rise, did as she had asked him.

A few minutes later, and Addie, having bid good-bye to Mrs. Melverton, returned to where Cuthbert, with Lord Dunmore, were seated in the carriage awaiting her.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### EXPLANATIONS.

OF course Miss Garthorne was very curious as well as surprised, when the carriage returned with her nephew, his wife, and a stranger, who, leaning on the arm of the former, with a handkerchief bound round his head, entered the house, when he was led to the drawing-room and laid on a sofa, whilst a servant was despatched for a doctor.

"What is the matter!" she asked of Addie, who stood by the side of the injured man, but further than that it was her brother who had met with an accident she gave her no satisfaction, whilst Lord Dunmore almost rudely pushed her aside.

"You had better retire, I think," he said, "as the doctor will soon be here;" and as she still stayed he moved and opened the door, an action she could not misconstrue as, tossing her head, she passed through the same.

The wound did not turn out so serious as Geoffrey at first apprehended, and further than weakness from loss of blood the doctor declared there was nothing to fear, but it was not until his strength was so far restored as to enable him to converse without effort that Lord Dunmore approached the subject of his secret meeting with Addie.

"You might have got me into a deuce of a scrape," he said, one day soon after, as he sat smoking a cigar, whilst Cuthbert reclined on the couch by the library window. "Just suppose I had killed you, which at that moment I might have done, a nice mess I should have been in!"

"It would not have mattered much, my life is a worthless one," replied the other.

"The better reason why a good man should not hang for it," replied Lord Dunmore, smiling; "but look here, Cuthbert, why did you not let me know at first that you were Addie's brother?"

"Has not she told you, then?" asked Cuthbert. "Oh, Lord Dunmore, I fear when you know all, you will turn your back on me."

"She has told me nothing," replied the latter, "nor do I wish you to tell me anything which you would rather I did not know, as I assure you, for the sake of your mother, I have no wish but to be your friend."

"Yes, my poor mother," he answered; "you are very good, Lord Dunmore; and does she know where I am?"

"Yes," replied his lordship. "I saw her yesterday and told her that you had met with an accident when on your way to see her, and that you were for the present under my roof."

"And what did she say?" he asked.

"Now that is just the point I am coming to," replied his lordship, as, throwing away his cigar, he advanced to where the young man was reclining. "She asked me with a white, scared expression on her face, if I knew who I was harbouring, and was about to begin a long story, when I told her if there was anything I ought to know I would hear it from no other lips but yours. Remember, Cuthbert, I am your friend, and as such I ask you to tell me what there is in your past that I ought to know?"

"And I will tell you," he answered, "but don't ring for lights, my lord, I feel I could disclose to you my life's history better in the soft twilight."

"You were, as you know, away from Riverdale the few last years that my mother remained here as housekeeper, and that when she removed to the Cottage left her by your father's will you saw very little of her home life, never coming across me during the few months I was at home previous to my going to London, to fill the situation which, through the late lord's influence, had been obtained for me, previous to his death, as cashier to the firm of Laurie and Sons, large merchants in the City."

"For a time all went well, and my employers placed implicit faith in me, until, unfortunately, having much spare time on my hands and no friends, I fell in with a fast set, and soon found myself spending not only more money than I earned, but ruining my health also by the life of dissipation into which I was led."

"From bad I went to worse, until I found myself responsible for a debt of honour I was unable to pay. It was the old story. I appropriated moneys belonging to the firm, intending to repay the same when luck turned in my favour, which I might have done had it not been that a fellow, who was jealous of the position I had obtained from the first, through his being much older than myself, and having been some time in the office, having his suspicions aroused, watched me closely, and finally laid a trap into which I fell, and by which all became known to the manager, who, acting on the authority of the firm, on account of your late father's interest, merely dismissed me with a caution."

"And I suppose the other fellow walked into your shoes," said Lord Dunmore.

"I don't know, but very likely," replied Cuthbert, "but that was not the worst. I soon obtained another berth, and entered it with a firm resolve to resist every temptation, and show my gratitude for my lucky escape, by determining to act honestly in the future, and I really believe I should have done so had not a temptation, greater than I had ever known, presented itself to break my resolution."

"I became deeply enamoured of a young girl, to whom I had been introduced at a friend's house; but her father, a retired tradesman, who had accumulated great wealth, scornfully refused the offer I made for his daughter's hand, asking me with a sneer, how I thought to marry on such a pittance as I was then in receipt of."

"I asked him if that was his only objection! He said, 'Yes, as a man he rather liked me, but his daughter's husband must be able to support her in the style to which she had been accustomed.'"

"I did not tell him that she had not always known such luxuries as she now possessed; but



left him, after a loving farewell to Agatha, who reiterating her vows that she would never marry anyone else, and I vowing within myself to obtain that which would make her mine.

"I had read of large fortunes made on the Stock Exchange in a day; and as immense sums passed through my hands in the way of business, a sudden temptation took possession of me. An idea flashed across my brain, and I gained an introduction to a broker; but my speculations failed, until I knew exposure was inevitable, and without being a shilling richer for the moneys I had embezzled—not even daring to pay a last visit to Agatha, I fled, too well knowing that the police would be on my track before I had time to escape. I had written to my mother, who told me she would refund the money if I could only prevent its being found out for a few days. Poor mother! But the day she was to have sold all she had for my benefit I decamped, not daring even to tell her the extent of my delinquencies."

"And did they put the police on your track?" asked Lord Dunmore, as he remembered the incident of Mr. Hart's visit.

"Yes," replied Cuthbert; "but I eluded their grasp. I had hidden that very night in a cupboard, in my mother's room, when knowing escape to be impossible, and that my place of concealment would be easily discovered, I emerged from the same, as the latter, with Addie, were talking to the detectives in the hall; when, passing by the table, an unclosed letter attracted my attention. I don't know what induced me, in my hurry, to look at it, but I did; it was a note for one hundred pounds, and without further thought I took it and fled."

"My note!" exclaimed Lord Dunmore as vainly endeavouring to conceal the horror depicted on his countenance, at the discovery he had made of the thief in the person of his wife's brother; he paced the room, as the door opened, and Addie entered.

"Cuthbert," he said, as he approached to where the young man still lay; I find it hard to forgive you, and until you are well I will not ask you to leave my roof; but when that time arrives I cannot offer you my hospitality further, until, may be, years to come, you can return when this stain upon your honour has been wiped out."

"Do you know all, Geoffrey?" asked Addie, as she clung to her husband's arm.

"No Addie," said Cuthbert, "not all that you have risked for my sake. Tell him, sister dear, that when I go from hence I may know that between you, now, no secret will exist, and I swear before Heaven never again to cross your path, until, as he says, I can do so with an unblemished name."

And in the gloaming Addie told her husband the rest of the request she had made to Sir Arthur Leslie, the meeting in the Linden Grove, and for what end she had borrowed the money to save Cuthbert from further crime.

It was some time when she ceased speaking before Lord Dunmore made any reply; his mind for a moment soared 'twixt pride for the name he bore, and love for the wife he loved, even now to a greater degree, when he became aware of the self-sacrifice of which she was capable.

"Can you forgive me, Geoffrey?" she at last asked, as she felt his breast, on which her head rested, with the emotion passing within; when drawing her close to him, and passing his hand over her hair,—

"Forgive you, darling!" he said; "my own darling wife, even as I hope to be forgiven."

#### AFTER YEARS.

TEN years have passed since that day on which Cuthbert Melverton left Riversdale. Lord Dunmore, determining no stone should be left unturned to enable him to retrieve the past, procured for him a passage to Australia, with a letter of recommendation to one of the leading firms in Sydney; and, although Sir Arthur Leslie never knew the true history, still he was told sufficient to make him aware that it was to assist a wild brother that Addie had asked him to advance money without Lord Dunmore's knowledge.

Mrs. Melverton has long left Harebell Cottage,

at the request of her son, joining him in the home he had made for her in the fair colony; whilst the Honourable Miss Garthorne, who trembled on her throne at Linden Court for a short time, is now fully reinstated in her former estate; her chief happiness being in the society of her little grandnephews and nieces, who think there is no one in the world like Auntie.

And Lord Dunmore has no reason to regret the clemency he showed to his brother-in-law, as in reading his last letter in which he tells him of the bright new life opened to him, his darling wife—his greatest treasure—and the little son given him to add to his happiness, all of which he considers he owes to him and the dear sister who suffered so much for his sake.

[THE END.]

#### LIFE AND NATURE.

I PASSED through the gates of the city,  
The streets were strange and still;  
Through the doors of the open churches  
The organs were moaning shrill.

Through the doors and the great high windows  
I heard the murmur of prayer,  
And the sound of their solemn singing  
Streamed out on the sunlit air;

A sound of some great burden  
That lay on the world's dark breast,  
Of the old, and the sick, and the lonely,  
And the weary that cried for rest.

I strayed through the midst of the city,  
Like one distracted or mad.  
"Oh, Life! oh, Life!" I kept saying,  
And the very word seemed sad.

I passed through the gates of the city,  
And I heard the small birds sing;  
I laid me down in the meadows  
Afar from the bell-ringing.

In the depth and the bloom of the meadows  
I lay on the earth's quiet breast!  
The poplar fanned me with shadows,  
And the very song me to rest.

Blue, blue was the heaven above me,  
And the earth green at my feet;  
"Oh, Life! oh, Life!" I kept saying,  
And the very word seemed sweet.

#### HOUSEKEEPING.

AN overworked woman may keep her house in order, but she adds little to the comfort of her home. Good housekeeping is by no means as rare as good homekeeping. It is of far less importance.

A certain amount of drudgery must be gone through with, daily, in any calling; about three-fourths of life is drudgery. One-fourth can be rescued from the toll and toil of the world by management and thought.

The most difficult and the most necessary lesson for a housekeeper to learn is that she must assert her individuality. It is useless to try to please everybody. Many things in our homes are done with "an eye single" to our neighbours.

Work must be pruned down and lopped off until it matches strength, for the latter refuses to be enlarged by any amount of thought. It is a nice point to adjust this balance properly. It requires much giving up and letting go. What shall we give up? Ah, there's the rub. Everything seems important.

Things must be kept clean, there is no doubt about that; but the number of things to be kept clean may be greatly diminished. But each must solve for herself the question of simplifying living. Women's fetters are largely

self-made. Carvings, upholstery, brasses, bronzes, that cause frowns, backaches, irritability, and heart aches, are a poor investment of money and time. Things, more than people, bring women to the verge of despair.

The endless round of imagined duties causes chronic overwork among women, produces the saddest results to them and those dependent upon them for rest and comfort.

"There is nothing in the world I dread," said the Household Philosopher, "like a thoroughly exhausted woman. No amount of personal comfort ever compensates for such a state of affairs." Of course not. What constantly tired woman is capable of generous sympathy and ready help, or of companionship! Can she divide care and double joy?

The better part of life cries out for warmth and tenderness; but the women who should give it are blindly wasting themselves on material things, pushing the outside of the cup without a thought of the wine within.

#### HOME ADORNMENT.

HANDSOME covers for sofa pillows and cushions are knitted in silk pieces. The real foundation for the stripe—for it is made in stripes—is knit of common yarn, and with medium-sized needles; knit three rows, then draw through each loop on the next row a bit of silk. The silk must be cut in narrow strips of equal length and width. The yarn must be drawn firmly down to hold the silk in place. Old and even soiled ribbons may be used in this way.

The portieres for china closets are very ornamental. A novel style, and one that is comparatively inexpensive, can be made of a worn bedspread. Dip it into water coloured with coffee, border the spread with a strip of Turkish red, then cut out of cretonne cloth blossoms of gay colours with their foliage; place these for an inner border, buttonhole these appliqued pieces with embroidery silk, working the slender stems. Hang this curtain on a pole, using brass rings.

When the stopper of a glass decanter is too tight, a cloth wet with hot water and applied to the neck will cause the glass to expand, and the stopper may be removed.

If your hall is lighted by means of glass in the door, a pretty way to arrange a curtain is to tack it at the top and bottom, then tie a ribbon around the curtain in the middle; do not tie it so close that the folds will be stiff and ungraceful, but let them hang loosely, and have the bow on the inside. If the glass is in two panes, the curtains will look still prettier if one is put over each pane.

Brass ornaments may be cleaned by washing with roche alum boiled to a lye, in the proportion of an ounce to a pint; when dry they must be rubbed with fine chamolis.

It is a good plan to make a little pair of sleeves to draw over the baby's arms when he is playing on the floor; a rubber cord may be run in the top if care is taken not to have it too tight. Sleeves made of stockinet draw on and off easily.

#### DON'TS FOR SWEETHEARTS.

DON'T flirt. If you have already won the love of a good young man or woman, you ought not to risk losing it by flirtation with others, no matter how slight. While your sweetheart may have full confidence in your love, it is hardly likely his or her dignity will allow of flirting.

DON'T, on the other hand, be too jealous and construe ordinary attentions paid by your lover to others of your sex into love-making. Besides causing you many unnecessary heart-burnings, jealousy may make you ridiculous in the eyes of your friends and ungenerous in the eyes of your lover.

DON'T make it too apparent to all the world that you are sweethearts. While you ought always to be kind and attentive to each other,

reserves your demonstrations of affection for times when you are alone.

Don't let your sweetheart monopolize all your time or your love. The house folks have surely a claim to a share, seeing they have expended so much of both on you.

Don't expect perfect perfection in each other. Doubtless you will both have little peculiarities—perhaps even faults—but it is wise to overlook them as far as possible, and at least to make as little of them as you can.

Don't indulge in petty quarrels. Once indulged in, the habit is apt to grow, and it is one from which no good can arise, but which proves an endless source of unhappiness.

Don't be ashamed of home or the folks there, but take your sweetheart to make the acquaintance of both.

#### LATE HOURS.

In the city, our evening amusements always begin and end too late. The usual hours of our operatic, theatrical, and other entertainments are from eight to twelve o'clock. The consequence is, that those who frequent them are hardly in their beds before the next day begins to point. They are thus deprived of the quantity of sleep essential to health, which requires about eight hours of it for a grown-up person.

The old may not want so much, but the very young demand a great deal more. Now, it is not age, but youth which mainly indulges in these late amusements, and thus those to whom the most sleep is necessary get the least.

Though there may be a few of these young people who can borrow from the day what they have spent on the night, the large majority have no such spare fund of time to draw upon. All that they give to the late entertainments they take from sleep, and their health suffers accordingly.

There is no more common cause of physical injury to our youth than late hours. Sleep is necessary for vigorous health. We doubt whether there are ten in a hundred of our busiest young men who are fairly asleep before midnight.

We are sure that the vast majority of them lose, almost every night of their lives, two hours at least of sleep. The loss is ordinarily more than the absolute time they are out of bed for, when wakefulness is unduly prolonged, a nervous restlessness is apt to ensue, which is fatal to soundness of slumber. This prolongation of the day far into the night not only deprives us of the beneficent influence of natural sleep, but engenders in all the vital functions of the body a morbid activity which wastes and very soon wears it out.

No one can fail to have remarked, especially in the young, how all their faculties seem quickened when some unusual cause of wakefulness makes them forgetful of bedtime.

Persons who are habitually stupid at ten o'clock, will thus become animated by an unwonted intelligence at midnight. It is not only the intellectual faculties which are stimulated by an inordinate wakefulness, but every corporeal organ is roused to an unnatural degree of activity. The appetites and desires are sharpened to an excessive eagerness, and their gratification becomes irresistible.

For example, who has not observed how late hours provoke indulgence in eating and drinking? Who has not been conscious at the midnight supper of a hunger and thirst which the repasts of the day have failed to excite? This is, of course, a fatness of living fatal to good health and long life. By thus increasing its speed we shorten it. While doubling the days by adding the nights to them, we diminish proportionately their number.

## THE JEALOUS SISTER.

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### CHAPTER XXIX.

Miss Burton expected and intended to monopolize Paul after dinner, but Mrs. Penfold forestalled her by leading her to the grand piano.

"Some of your exquisite music, my dear," she pleaded.

Miss Burton was an accomplished pianist, and yielded readily to the request. Under her skillful touches a flood of harmony filled the drawing-room.

In the midst of it, Hilda, who had chosen the obscurest corner, heard a chair drawn to her side, and a persuasive voice whispering:

"Have you ever repeated throwing away my poor flowers?"

With a start she looked up at him, catching a glance half serious, half mocking, and answered in pique:

"I could not repent giving anything I possessed to divine Calvé!"

Paul threw her a reproachful look, but she would not meet it, only looking away at Miss Burton, and said, carelessly:

"How well Miss Burton plays. I quite envy her the gift."

Paul replied, incautiously:

"You play almost as well, and with such instructors as she has had, your performance would excel hers, in my opinion."

"What can you know of my playing?" she stammered, with a lightning suspicion that he had heard her at some time in his London house.

"I have heard you play several times," he owned, quietly; and the colour flew to her cheek in a burning tide.

She asked herself how many times he had been in the house without her knowledge. Of course it was he who had sent her so much new music along with flowers and fruit. The sense of obligation weighed like an unwelcome burden.

He whispered, softly:

"May I not call on you to-morrow? I believe we owe each other explanations."

Hilda started, but said, coldly:

"You cannot come. We are leaving England very early in the morning."

"Going where?" he exclaimed in his surprise.

"Back to—Cloverdale!"

"May I ask why?"

"My mother is homesick."

"And you?"

"I am also," coldly, looking askance at him, and wondering at the cloud on his face.

He blurted out:

"Have you heard from Hill Crest lately? Did you know that Huntly Warner has sold the old home-place?"

"Impossible!" she gasped, growing deathly white, and almost faintly. Miss Burton's music sounding faint and far off like a dream.

"Forgive me, I did not mean to shock you so," he pleaded, longing to kiss the quivering lips.

She faltered, in dismay:

"This will break mamma's heart. She has been pining all the winter for the dear old home. I was to take her there to-morrow."

"Let me help you to manage it. I know the lawyer that bought the place. He does not mean to live there himself, and would let it to a good tenant. Shall I write him for you?"

"No, I thank you; but if you will give me his address, please—"

He scribbled it on a card and thrust it in her hand.

"Why, it is our own lawyer at Hill Crest;" she exclaimed.

"Yes; so you can see him as soon as you get there, and I hope you will have no trouble over the matter."

Miss Burton finished her performance with a crashing chord, and whirled around on her seat, exclaiming:

"Now, Miss Stuart, it is your turn."

Hilda shook her head, laughing:

"Not after you, Miss Burton."

"Then it's your turn, Miss Denver!" cried the brunette, escorting Rose to the piano.

"Let us have a song. Rose will play your accompaniment, Paul," observed his mother, getting uneasy at his whispered conversation with beautiful Hilda.

He went over to Rose obediently, and his mother slipped into his place, remarking:

"So you knew my son before you met him to-night!"

"Yes; I met him at my friend's wedding last year," Hilda said, indifferently, not thinking it worth while to recall that earlier acquaintance so fraught with pain. She added: "My home is at Hill Crest, you know, and Mr. Denver was telling me some news from there."

"Ah, yes; very interesting, no doubt!"

"Very," Hilda returned, briefly, freezing instantly to the haughty dame, who immediately began to study her intently, but said no more, because her daughter began at that moment to play.

Every eye was bent on Paul, as he stood up, straight and tall and marvellously handsome, beside his sister. Every one else in the room knew, if Hilda did not, that he had a magnificent tenor voice and could have made his fortune on the stage if a rich father had not left him a fortune.

He waited till the low prelude was over, then a magnetic thrill passed over Hilda as his voice broke on the air in a song he had himself chosen.

Mrs. Penfold heard a long, low quivering sigh, and looked around at her companion; who had quite forgotten her in rapt attention to the singer. Her lips were parted, her cheeks pale, her eyes starry with emotion.

The lady exclaimed, petulantly:

"Why did you give us that hackneyed old thing of Byron? Sing us something gay and cheerful."

"No; I am not in good voice. I can sing no more to-night," he replied, going over to talk to Miss Burton again.

### CHAPTER XXX.

Mrs. PENFOLD, well pleased, whispered to Hilda in a confidential way—

"He cannot leave Miss Burton long enough to sing for us, but I am very well satisfied. The match would please me extremely well."

Hilda nodded and smiled as if every word had not pierced, like a thorn, to her inmost heart.

But she hated herself for caring.

Mrs. Penfold continued, blandly.

"Paul admires her very much, and anyone can see how charming she finds him. But almost all the women adore my son."

This last had a touch of defiance in it, for the lady remembered that Bertha had said Hilda had a violent antipathy for him.

She studied the girl in something like wonder at what she considered her bad taste, though she was rather pleased that he did not care for the pretty little scribbler.

She detected a smile of delicate sarcasm on Hilda's rosy lips, and it nettled her into saying,—

"But Paul is very hard to please. He has his ideals. For instance, he detests coquetry."

She meant this for a home-thrust, but Hilda replied with spirit—

"A male flirt is just as inexcusable."

"You are right, and I am sure Paul thinks so, too. He would not stoop to flirting. That is why I think his attentions to Miss Burton are serious," said the lady, artfully pretending to see much in little.

Hilda had no answer, but a careless smile. She fancied she could see that the rich woman was trying to warn her off forbidden ground, and longed to say to her, scornfully,—

"Do not be frightened. I would not accept your son if he begged me on bended knees to be his wife!"

Mrs. Penfold could not help but admire her beauty and spirit. She owned to herself that the girl's beauty was flawless, and that she had the air of a young princess. She longed to know why she was so impertinent as to dislike Paul, but of course she could not ask; so, presently, when her husband took her seat on the other side of Hilda, she moved away.

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Hilda was secretly uneasy, longing to know why Huntly Warner had sold Cloverdale, and eager to ask Paul about Phyllis, but she could not thrust herself upon him; she must patiently wait her opportunity.

But he seemed oblivious to her existence awhile, courteously lending himself to the amusement of Miss Burton.

Hilda could not complain. She had given him no cause to believe he would be welcome by her side. On the contrary, she had flouted him on every occasion, taking vengeance for the slight she could never forget. She laughed to herself in dreary mockery at the pretence of Mrs. Penfold that her son was above flirting.

Paul's step-father saw that the fair face looked bored and a little sad, and exerted himself to amuse her. She found him so jolly and delightful that her heart warmed to him. How different he was to his handsome, haughty wife, so afraid that she would try to captivate Paul!

Rose came beaming up presently to announce that a night-blooming cereus was about to unfold in the conservatory. Wouldn't everybody like to go and see the beautiful sight? She had heard that poets likened it to the sudden birth of love in the human heart.

She linked Hilda's arm affectionately in her own and led the way, the others following, Paul with Miss Burton.

Hilda drew a breath of keen delight as they walked down the flowery aisles of bloom, wishing that her ailing mother could have shared with her this exquisite treat.

They grouped themselves about the cactus plant that was about to unfold its magnificent snow-white bloom, and Hilda became aware that Paul had placed himself close to her, with the heiress on the other side. She choked down her pride enough to voluntarily address him.

"Have you seen Phyllis lately?"

"No," he replied; and she saw surprise in his face, as he added: "Have you not heard that she is gone away from London on the Continent?"

"I knew she wished to travel on the Continent, but I had not heard of her going. Our correspondence was infrequent," she replied.

"It was not on the Continent but to America that she went. Her husband sold all his property here, and went West to make his future home. I do not believe she was pleased with the change; but he was ruining himself at the gaming-table in London. I am told, so the change was best."

So Phyllis was gone. She had deserted them without a word or sign. Hilda's heart sank at thought of the pang it would cost her mother.

"Why do mothers always love their children, no matter how unworthy they prove!" she wondered.

"I suppose Phil will write us of the change she has made," she said to Paul, trying to excuse her sister's heartlessness, then turned away lest Miss Burton should think she was trying to monopolize him.

But amid the heavy perfumes of the odoriferous place, with the clatter of their voices in her ears, she was like one in a dream, haunted by the sweetness and the pathos of the words he had sung just now.

"He was singing to me," said her heart. "Was it only to try his power? But I shall give no sign of the unconquerable spell that binds me fast despite all the struggles of pride."

"How exquisite the unfolding of that flower!—like love in a young girl's heart bursting into sudden glorious bloom," Paul said in her ear.

But she did not turn her head. How dared he remind her of that which was her keenest misery now?

They spent an hour in the conservatory, wondering over and admiring the beautiful cactus, and the host gathered for Hilda a bunch of the rarest flowers.

"Let me add one to the collection," said Paul, quickly presenting a crimson rose, and adding, in an undertone: "Do not treat it as cruelly as the others."

She accepted it with a careless smile, but his

mother thought it was coquetry when she pinned it on her breast.

For him, he was secretly overjoyed. He took it as a sign of relenting.

Then it was time for the carriage to be called to take her home. Paul longed to accompany her, but he dared not offer. He could only bid her good-night with the kindness of the others.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

BACK at Cloverdale again, with the orchards white with bloom, the sky as blue as Italy, the birds nesting, the streams singing—oh, it was worth all they had endured to be so happy now!

On their arrival they had gone to the lawyer's office, and he had extended a most cordial welcome.

"Back again, Mrs. Stuart, with little Hilda. Bless my soul! I don't like your pale cheeks! The big city didn't suit you, it's plain to be seen. But you'll soon get back your roses at Hill Crest. Want to rent Cloverdale, you say? Well, well, what a streak of luck for you! I got a letter lately from the owner, and he told me not to rent it, but let it out free for a year to some good tenant who would take good care of it. So you see you came in the nick of time. Who would care for Cloverdale as well as you two who love it so! You can have the key this minute and go right in."

"The Warners sold it as it stood—furniture and everything—that is, I bought the stock myself; but if you want the Jersey cow, Mrs. Stuart, I'll sell her back too. Yes, Miss Hilda, I took care of Rex for you. Go and see my wife, and you'll find him there. What a rousing welcome you'll get from the big black fellow! So you're not married yet? Well, well, plenty of time! I'm afraid Phyllis's watch isn't turning out well. Bad reports of him from London. Got into a fast set that fleeced him at the gaming-table. Sold out everything here, and went West to break with the sharpers."

"Bad break that, I call it—out of the frying-pan into the fire! Chicago wickedest city in the world. Who bought Cloverdale? Oh, yes, fellow of the name of Grainger—lives in London—wants it for a summer home when he gets married, but hasn't picked out the girl yet. Yes, yes, clover chaps! Wait five minutes and I'll go with you to my house. Wife will be charmed to see you!"

So he ran on, while Mrs. Stuart could hardly speak for joy, so happy was she in getting back to the old home, and finding everything as easy for her as if her truest friend had planned it.

So they were home again with Rex, and Cherry, the cow, and a stout, rosy girl to do the housework, so that Hilda and her mother could enjoy a little leisure, and get back the colour that had faded in their hard struggle for life in the cruel city, and every one was calling to welcome them back, and life seemed bright and glad once more.

"Oh, Hilda, it is heavenly! I will never leave Cloverdale again!" cried the glad mother.

Then a shadow fell over the lovely young face.

"But mamma, you forget—it is not ours now. What a pity you signed away your dower-right to Phyllis for a home last year! If you had not done that they never could have sold it."

"Yes, I was foolish; but they were always throwing up our dependences. I thought it would be sort of paying our way. But they took the advantage of me, and then you would go away."

"I have never told you the truth about it, mamma, but I will now." Phyllis turned me out-of-doors. She said I could not stay, because her husband liked me too well."

"Why, he treated you worse than a slave—played the tyrant to us both! But Phyllis always had a jealous nature. She took it after her father, poor man! I never was happy with him as I was afterward with your dear papa, Mr. Stuart. Ah, Hilda, that is why I cling to this place—because I was so happy here with him, first sweethearts, and then in our happy married days! When I'm here he seems nearer to me than anywhere else. The flowers, the

birds, the breeze, all have a message from him to my plating heart. Ah, dear, you can't understand it now, but wait till you fall in love!" she broke off, sobbing, and Hilda kissed her with a smothered sigh, and calling Rex, went off to mope beside the brook on the green bank where she had seen him first, her false love. Yes, she knew too well how associations could be hallowed and made sacred by love.

She had brought home the red rose he had given her at parting, and pressed it in her Bible. When she looked at it the ice round her heart seemed to melt, and she almost felt as if he must be true after all, and that she ought to forgive him now because he seemed to be repentant.

But still he did not come to say that he was sorry, and wanted her to forgive him. She wondered vaguely why, and with the wonder came the old distrust. Perhaps he was courting Miss Burton, as his mother desired.

Well, she need not care; she was not at a loss for lovers. Gordon Phillips was married, to be sure; but there were others. New admirers bowed at her shrine, but she was careless of their attentions. This pleased her mother, who had lately decided that Hilda ought never to marry.

"I have often heard your father remark, my dear, that literary women should never marry. The demands of a family would detract from the time and thought necessary to brain-work. With a man it was the other way. With a dotting wife to coddle him, he could give better work to the public."

"Oh, mamma, please don't begin to call me a literary woman yet, with my first book not yet out!" blushed Hilda.

"But the publisher wrote you to be expecting copies next week, and the advertisements are beginning to appear. Now, Hilda, promise me never to marry until you have saved enough money to buy back Cloverdale for me."

"It is sold for a thousand, mamma, dear, and how can I ever earn so much?"

"Easily, with your books, dear."

"Very well, mamma; I'll promise to buy back the farm for you before I change my name!" Hilda laughed, more gaily than she felt, to cheer the anxious little mother.

When she had been at Cloverdale three weeks the first copies of the novel were forwarded by the publisher.

Hilda was so happy she could not help weeping.

The book was bound as she had wished, in white and gold, and on the cover was printed, in gold, the title and her name "A Wayside Flower," by Hilda Stuart.

Presently, when she grew calmer, she wrapped up a copy for Paul Denver. On the title-page she pressed some rose-leaves to remind him of his gift.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

HILDA wondered if Paul Denver would write to praise her book, and all the flattering newspaper notices her publisher sent in the next two weeks failed to make up for his unaccountable silence.

Just as she began to repent having sent it, she received a cordial letter from Rose Denver in praise of it.

"We had a copy from the publisher the very day it came out," she wrote. "Paul read it aloud to us on two successive evenings. By us I mean to include Miss Burton, whom mamma brought home with us from Glasgow, for a long visit; perhaps you saw that mamma is trying to make a match between her and Paul. Isn't it amusing? I don't think the young lady is averse to the plan, but Paul is simply bored. Mamma keeps him on duty all the time, and he vows he will make a break for liberty some day. We were enchanted with your novel. Every thought was so fresh and sweet, and the story seemed as if you had just known it all the while. We came to the last words with regret, and we all hope you are writing another one to be published soon."

"Paul has told me—entirely confidentially—



HILDA DREW A BREATH OF KEEN DELIGHT AS THEY WALKED DOWN THE FLOWERY AISLES OF BLOOM.

that it was you—you dear, gifted girl—and your mamma, who took care of the house while we were gone—that is, till you finished your novel, and went off to get it published. You can't think how proud we both are that it was written in our house. You shall make me a long visit soon and write some more here.

"Have you seen my cousin Bertha since she returned? Tell her I'm coming to see her this summer—and you. I'm going to bring my bicycle—do you like cycling?—and we can have some lovely spins together."

Hilda was suddenly reminded of her fondness for cycling, which her long siege of trouble had driven from her mind. The old yearning returned with the same inability to gratify it.

"I do wish I could afford a nice bicycle, but I daren't waste the money I have, for who knows when I shall get any more. Perhaps Phyllis has left her old one here. I'll get it repaired and go out every day," she decided, and carried the plan into action.

But as the fame of her book grew, the lovely young authoress found that her movements abroad excited the interest of the newspaper correspondents who occasionally visited Hill Crest. Soon she was blushing vividly over a description of herself cycling that appeared simultaneously in several papers. Her beauty and her skill were commended in flattering phrases, her home described, and her handsome pet, Rex, given due prominence.

"They have told all they knew about me," she complained.

"It is the penalty of greatness," laughed Bertha Manners, who had dropped in sociably for a morning call.

"I'm glad they didn't find out it was Phil's old bicycle. That would have told that on me too, if they had guessed it," pouted Hilda.

"Why don't you have a new one?"

"I cannot afford it. Mamma wants me to save my money to buy back Cloverdale."

"Nonsense! You will marry rich some day."

"I shall not marry at all."

"Why did you throw over my rich cousin, Paul?"

"I did nothing of the kind. I saw him but a few times. Rose writes me, his mamma is making a match between him and the rich Miss Burton of Glasgow."

"Humph! I wish you two had taken a fancy to each other."

"Bertha, come out and see my flowers. Wasn't it just lovely, our getting this place just now for nothing? Oh, Heaven has been very good to me of late!" cried Hilda, turning the conversation.

"Hilda, you might set your cap for the new owner. He is a bachelor, they say, and quite rich."

"I am not setting my cap, thank you. Really, Hugh Manners must be a paragon, you have turned such a match-maker!"

"Perhaps I inherit it from my cousin Paul's mother. Do you know she wanted to make a grand match for me once, and rather turned up her nose at dear old Hugh, a lawyer in a country town. I only laughed, but she forgave me, and sent some magnificent silver pieces for my bridal gift."

The next day Hilda received an astonishing letter from her publisher.

"I am besieged with requests for your address, but as most of the writers are merely autograph hunters, I usually refuse their requests. To-day I took the liberty of transgressing my rule in favour of a manufacturer, who was so charmed with 'A Wayside Flower' that he desired to send you a bicycle of his own make as a testimony of his enjoyment of your novel. The bicycle goes to you by express to-day, and I hope you will think it quite proper to accept it."

"Your novel is making much more of a success than I expected, and royalties will be coming in to you soon. The reviews are very flattering, and you may begin another romance for us at any time you choose."

ALICIA.

Hilda's delight in the elegant new bicycle was

almost pathetic, and as the giver had not sent any direct letter, she returned through the publisher her profuse thanks.

Then she proceeded to enjoy the gift as any girl would who had longed to own a bicycle for years and at last had her yearning gratified.

"I am almost happy at last?" she cried to her mother, radiantly.

"Almost, Hilda—but why not quite happy? What cloud obscures your sunshine?" Mrs. Stuart cried, anxiously.

Hilda sprang from the bicycle, laughing lightly, as she answered,—

"What cloud could there be? In fact, I have good news for you. Here is a belated letter from Phyllis that has followed us from Glasgow. It is postmarked almost a month ago. I did not open it, thinking you might wish to read it with me." She tore off the envelope and they read together,—

"MAMMA and HILDA.—Can you come to me here at once? I am ill of a fever, and the physician thinks I cannot live but a few days longer. My baby was born a few weeks ago, and there is no one to care for it when I am gone, for my cruel husband has squandered everything and deserted me. I am penniless, friendless, the inmate of a hospital, and soon to rest in a pauper's grave unless you save me from that deep disgrace."

PHYLLIS.

(To be continued.)

"I know not," says Ruskin, "if a day is ever to come when the nature of right freedom will be understood, and when men will see that to obey another man, to labour for him, yield reverence to him, is not slavery. It is often the best kind of liberty—liberty from care. The man who says to one, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh, has in most cases more sense of restraint and difficulty than the man who obeys him."





MRS. LESTER FROWNED A LITTLE AS SHE SAW LISA LEANING AGAINST LORD CARLYON'S CHAIR.

## THE TRIALS OF HERMIONE.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

MR. NORTON and Lord Carlyon sat in blank silence for a few minutes, then the lawyer said, half reproachfully,—

"Strange that I never thought of it before. You had spoken to me of Miss Brown, and said you all thought she had some secret trouble. Mrs. Carlyon, indeed, had described her to me, and yet it never once entered my head that she could be the unhappy girl I had known as Hermione Carlyon."

"I should have thought, judging from your description of her, nothing would have induced her to come to us," said Denis, slowly.

Mr. Norton sighed.

"Probably, poor girl, she felt that nowhere else could she be so safely hidden from her husband. You see it was absolutely the last place where he would have thought of looking for her. Then it is just possible that the arrangements were made before Mrs. Clifford knew her employer's name. Your sister, Mrs. Nalra, who engaged her, would naturally say 'my mother' in speaking of Mrs. Carlyon. I think it quite likely that until the letter fixing the day for her to go to Brighton arrived, the poor girl had no idea she was to enter the house of her kinswoman."

"It explains so much," said Denis, sadly. "Do you know, Norton, the first time I ever saw her she looked at me as though she hated me! I felt at the time I must surely resemble some one who had injured her. It was just a fleeting expression on her face which passed almost immediately; but I have often thought of it since."

"I hope that wretch won't find her," said the lawyer, vindictively.

"I wonder how much he would take to leave her in peace!" exclaimed Lord Carlyon.

Mr. Norton stared in marked disapproval.

"You surely would not play into his hands,

His one object in marrying Hermione was to live in idleness on an allowance from you. Now that you know his character, his utter worthlessness, surely you would not give in to him?"

Denis hesitated.

"You'll think me as weak as water; but I feel half-inclined to make terms with him."

Mr. Norton shrugged his shoulders.

"It would be a mistake."

"I daresay; but just look at it from my point of view. Forget what I told you about 'Miss Brown' to-night; forget that I care for her as my own soul, and look on things as if she were merely my cousin, my nearest relation after my mother and sisters."

"Well!"

"She is only twenty, and unless some definite step is taken for her protection her whole life must be spent in trying to elude this man. She can never bear her own name, she must always live in hiding—in a long dread of being discovered by the scoundrel the law calls her husband."

"He is her husband," corrected Mr. Norton, drily. "Well, what next?"

"Clifford won't aim high. He can't, after all we know of him. Three hundred a-year would probably buy her peace!"

Mr. Norton looked at the speaker fixedly.

"You propose to offer James Clifford an allowance of three hundred a year on the sole condition that he does not attempt to molest his wife? Do I follow you?"

"That he undertakes never to force himself into her presence or claim his rights as her husband," corrected Denis. "For my part I think it would be money well invested."

"You may have to pay it fifty years," the lawyer reminded him, "which would mean an outlay of fifteen thousand pounds on that scoundrel. Is he worth it?"

"No; but Hermione's peace of mind is worth far more to me."

"Only the arrangement would do her no good until she knew of it. She might go on for years,

hiding herself from James Clifford, without guessing that you had bought him off."

"True! Well there is no need to decide the question now. Clifford is always to be heard of in Essex-street."

"Shall you tell your mother about Miss Brown?"

"That she is not Miss Brown, but our cousin Hermione! Yes. Mother has taken the greatest interest in Hermione's story, and she loved her companion almost as a daughter; to know they are one and the same will lessen her anxiety. Don't you see, Norton, she will have the fate of one lonely girl on her mind instead of two."

"I will call on Miss Withers as soon as I go back to town, and your mother had better write to the Hostel where Miss Brown stayed before coming here."

Denis shook his head.

"No; we must not do anything to prejudice the Matron of the Hostel against her. If she knew Miss Brown left us suddenly she might not recommend her elsewhere. If we do not write to the Hostel we shall feel that its hospitable doors are still open to Hermione."

"Well, I can call on Miss Stanley and ask her for Mary Brown's address. If she gives me Harley-gardens I shall know she has heard nothing lately."

Mrs. Carlyon burst into tears when she heard the story.

"If only I had guessed the truth! If only I had persuaded that poor child to confide in me I could have kept her here for good! We could surely have made some arrangement with her husband."

"It is odd we never suspected it," said Denis. "When I asked her to go with us to Carlyon, and she told me the trouble of her life came to her in Westshire, I might surely have guessed something."

Mrs. Carlyon sighed.

"It seems to me, Denis, we must surely find her again soon. Then, surely, the law can compel that man to leave her in peace."

"I am afraid he has the law on his side," said Denis. "Mother, as soon as I have settled Mrs. Lester's business, I shall go to London. I wish you would come with me. We could put up at some quiet hotel—my rooms aren't suited to a lady—and I can't bear the thought of leaving you here."

"I will come with pleasure," said Mrs. Carlyon; "but, Denis, it strikes me your business with Mrs. Lester will take longer than you think. The more I think about it, the more certain I feel that she is an adventuress, and a very clever one."

"Oh, Mr. Norton will see through her and help me to bring her to book. I wish with all my heart, though, that she could prove her niece was poor Home's heiress, then one of my responsibilities would be over."

Mr. Norton and Lord Carlyon called in Charlotte-street early the next day. They had sent no warning of their coming, and found that Mrs. Lester was not yet down.

"We will wait for her," said Mr. Norton, slipping half-a-crown into the servant's hand. "Please show us into her sitting-room!"

It was on the ground-floor, for which the lawyer felt thankful, as had it been above, Mrs. Lester's bedroom might have communicated with it, and their conversation been overheard. A beautiful child sat in the window looking at the sea, of which it was possible to obtain a tiny side peep by dint of much exertion.

"Are you Liisa Forbes?" asked Denis, gently.

"I am Liisa," she answered, with just the shadow of a foreign accent. "Shall I go and tell aunt you are here?"

"The servant has done that. Won't you stay and talk to us till she comes?"

He had a wonderful attraction for children, and Liisa was soon quite at home with him. She told him she did not like England. She wanted to go back to Italy.

"I was born there," she said, "and it seems home."

"Can you remember your own mother, little 'un?" asked Mr. Norton.

"No; she died when I was quite little. Aunt has been just like a mother to me—only now she is always too busy to talk to me."

It struck both the men that it was strange if Mrs. Lester gave less attention to Liisa now she was an heiress than she had given in the old days when the child depended on her for all.

"I suppose she has a great many letters to write," suggested Denis.

"She is always writing, and when my father comes she and he talk together and send me out to play. They have no time to be kind to me."

Little did Liisa guess that in that one sentence she had broken down the castle her guardian had so skilfully woven. The mention of "my father," told both the men something was at fault, seeing that Mrs. Lester had represented Liisa as an orphan.

"Then your father is in England?" asked Mr. Norton. "Is he at Brighton with you?"

"No; but he comes down pretty often. He was in Australia till a little while ago. I used to long for him to come home, but now I think I was happier in the old time when I had only aunt."

Enter Mrs. Lester elaborately dressed. She frowned a little as she saw Liisa leaning against Lord Carlyon's chair, evidently on very friendly terms with him.

"Run away, child," she said, gently; "these gentlemen and I have business to talk about, and a little girl would be in the way." Then, as the door closed on Liisa, she turned to her visitors.

"That is Mr. Home's heiress," she said cheerfully; "do you wonder that I am anxious to secure my darling her uncle's property?"

"She is a very pretty child," said Mr. Norton, "but she is not Mr. Home's heiress."

"Sir!" said Mrs. Lester, angrily, "you insult me! Nor do I know by what right you intrude here. My business is with Lord Carlyon!"

Denis bowed very gravely.

"I decline to discuss any business with you,

madam, unless this gentleman—Mr. Norton, my family lawyer and personal friend—is present."

Mrs. Lester shrugged her shoulders. "Then you had better tell him not to insult me. Really, Lord Carlyon, with a princely fortune of your own, you need not be so very anxious to dispute Mr. Home's property with my poor little Liisa!"

Denis grew white with anger, but Mr. Norton rejoined, coolly,—

"It is, probably, because Lord Carlyon is independent of fortune that he can fight this case impartially. I repeat in his name what he has written to you. Produce the certificate of your sister-in-law's baptism, and that of her parents' marriage, and we shall be prepared to admit your niece's claim."

"You know that I cannot. You know it is absurd to ask for such things."

Mr. Norton looked at her fixedly.

"You cannot produce them, because to do so would defeat your own cause. The scoundrel who is coaching you in your part knows perfectly that any certificate of the second marriage of Margaret Home (formerly Gordon) would not record Forbes as the bridegroom's name. You know that your sister-in-law would not be described in her baptismal certificate as the child of Charles and Margaret—the surname I must leave blank. When Andrew Duncan stole certain of his master's papers, he took care to select those that would prevent our being able to trace that master's sister."

"Mr. Duncan was not Mr. Home's servant but his friend."

"He was his domestic servant and personal attendant," said Carlyon, sharply. "The will describes him as his 'valet.' Mrs. Lester, there is no need to waste your time or ours. If you carry this case into court, our defence will be that the child you are representing as Mr. Home's niece is the daughter of his valet, Andrew Duncan. We shall send a special emissary to the village near Naples, where Duncan formerly lived in the service of the late Lord Carlyon, by whom he was dismissed for secretly marrying an Italian girl called Juanita Carelli, employed as nurse to Lord Carlyon's little daughter."

Mrs. Lester was a weak, cowardly sort of woman. She knew that the game was lost and broke into a flood of tears.

"Look here," said Mr. Norton, when she grew calmer, "we both know the fraud was not your idea; you were only the tool of a clever villain. Andrew Duncan needed someone to play the part of his daughter's benevolent aunt and he chose you. Just tell us all you know about it, and you shall go scot free."

She shook her head.

"He would never forgive me for betraying him. I dare not answer your questions."

Carlyon interposed.

"Madam, you have been cruelly imposed on. It is impossible that you, the widow of an English physician, can be afraid of a low designing scoundrel like Duncan! As my friend says, only make a clean breast of everything to us; return the little girl to her father, and we will see that you suffer nothing through his revenge."

"You don't understand," said Blanche Lester, cowering before them in an agony of shame; "he is my husband!"

Mr. Norton started.

"You cannot mean that you are Duncan's wife! We know he married an Italian nursemaid years ago."

"Yes; she was Liisa's mother. He was unfortunate after Lord Carlyon dismissed him, and went to Australia to try and make a home for his wife and child."

"My husband attended Juanita in her last illness, and heard her story. Only we were told that Mr. Duncan was Lord Carlyon's secretary and companion, and that the poor was only angry at his marrying beneath him."

"Juanita was penniless when she died; and we eased her last moments by promising to adopt her child as our own."

"When Mr. Duncan heard of the arrangement, he refused to agree to the adoption. He would leave Liisa with us willingly until he returned to Europe; then he must claim his child. Very

soon I was left a widow, and Liisa was all I had to love. My husband could only leave me enough money to bring in fifty pounds a-year, but Mr. Duncan began to send me a liberal sum for Liisa. I looked on him as my friend and equal."

"Go on," said Denis Carlyon; "be sure we shall not betray you. No testimony of yours can be used against the man, as you are his wife."

"And," put in Norton, quietly, "the scoundrel has so sheltered himself behind this lady that no prosecution of him would lie. Don't you see we have only her word that he told her Liisa was Mrs. Home's heiress—only her word that he is in any way answerable for the attempted fraud."

Mrs. Lester trembled from head to foot.

"He said that Mr. Home was his half-brother, but there was a quarrel between them, and Mr. Home left his property to their half-sister, passing over Duncan."

"Donald Home left a thousand pounds to 'his faithful valet, Andrew Duncan,'" said Lord Carlyon; "and, unworthy though Duncan has proved himself, I am ready to pay over the legacy at once."

"And," went on Mrs. Lester, "he said the sister was dead, and the money would revert to you. He declared you were too rich to need it, whereas it would make Liisa a rich woman. Then he said if we were married we could watch over her together, only no one must know of our wedding until Liisa had got her rights."

Mr. Norton looked amazed; he was thinking that for a clever, thorough-paced scoundrel he had rarely met Duncan's equal.

Lord Carlyon turned to the poor lady with a very compassionate face.

"No money has changed hands, and no actual harm has come of this imposture, Mrs. Lester (I will not call you Duncan). The law would judge you very harshly, and probably award you at the least a term of penal servitude. I am willing not to prosecute you. It seems to me the fate you have made for yourself as Duncan's wife is sufficient punishment, but, in return for my clemency, will you do one thing for me?"

"And gladly, if it won't harm him!"

"You know, you must have known, that Andrew Duncan would stand at very little when his own interest was concerned. Do you believe he stole his master's papers meaning to commit this fraud? Or did he take the profits of 'Lucy's' identity, meaning to obtain a heavy bribe from her for telling her of her good fortunes?"

"I am positive he never meant to try and get the property for Liisa at first. He spent ten days with us and never hinted at such a thing; he used to speak of some lady in England who would owe a great deal to him, and for his sake befriended his little girl; then he went to London, and was away two or three weeks."

"I think," she went on slowly, "that he found out there Mr. Home's sister was really dead. I am quite sure she was dead, but of late I have fancied she left a child—another girl. He has looked at Liisa sometimes and said to me it was a fine scheme that his child should rob his enemy's daughter of her rights!"

"By Heaven!" said Mr. Norton, suddenly, "I have found the missing link!"

Carlyon stared at him.

"And I am getting every moment more bewildered."

"Listen," said the lawyer. "Your cousin, the late Lord Carlyon, married a nursery governess, Lucy Fielding. She had been educated in a school for the daughters of officers. Her only relative was a half-brother who had emigrated years before. Don't you see it? Duncan knew the lady he sought had been brought up at the military orphanage. Applying there he would hear of her marriage and early death. We know he hated Hermione as the innocent cause of his disgrace years before."

"Rather than prove her claim to a fortune he would have left me in possession of it, but the idea came to him that with his knowledge of the family he could pass off his own child as Mr. Home's niece."

And the same thought was in Mr. Norton's mind and Denis Carlyon's. If once James Clifford



learned his wife was heiress to fifty thousand pounds; he would seek for her with redoubled zeal.

## CHAPTER XXII.

Nurse Ward had taken a great fancy to Miss Brown while she was nursing Lord Carlyon. She had indeed pined for her, for the keen-sighted, strong-minded speaker had been quick to see that the companion was not happy.

Belong, moreover, a true woman in her love of romance, Margaret Ward had guessed at her patient's secret long before he was aware of it himself. Before the nurse left Harley-gardens she felt that Lord Carlyon was on the high-road to falling in love with Miss Brown. Now, when she saw the girl sad, troubled and evidently a fugitive from the house where she had been made so much of, Nurse Ward jumped to the conclusion that Mrs. Carlyon had discovered her son's infatuation, and dismissed Mary Brown in disgrace.

Fortunately for Hermione Mrs. Ward was a gentle, sweet-faced old lady, very much impressed with her daughter's cleverness. She deferred to Margaret in every thing, loved as much as she admired her, and so far from resenting a stranger being thrown thus suddenly on her hospitality, she was only too glad to minister to the beautiful girl who lay like a fair white lily smitten by the storm.

The Wards were not poor; their means would have been ample for Margaret to live at home, but she had a passion for nursing. Her brother was married, and lived only a mile from Rose Cottage. His wife and children often begged Mrs. Ward's solitude, and she was quite content for her daughter to follow the profession to which she was so devoted.

Nurse Ward and the strong country servant carried Hermione upstairs and laid her on the little white bed in the spare room, then Margaret tried to restore the spirit to its prison house, but for some time her efforts were in vain. At last the girl slowly opened her eyes.

"Oh, is he here? Has he found me?"

"No one is here but my mother and the servant," said Miss Ward, gently. "Perhaps you do not remember me; I nursed Lord Carlyon in the worst part of his illness. Now I am spending a holiday with my mother. I was on the platform to-day to meet a friend from Brighton. She did not come, and I was just going home when I met you. I saw at once you were in trouble, and persuaded you to come home with me."

Hermione tried to rise.

"I must be going; I shall miss the train."

"There is no train yet, and indeed you are not fit to travel to-day. Cannot you be content to stay here with us till you are better?"

"You don't know"—the beautiful eyes were fixed on her in piteous appeal. "You don't know that I have run away. You would think me very wicked if you knew all."

"My dear," said the nurse frankly, "I think I can guess all. Mrs. Carlyon fancied her son was in love with you, and though she had been fond of you before, straightway turned against you. It is just like a fine lady, but I think Lord Carlyon is made of too noble stuff to forsake you at his mother's bidding."

"Oh, no!"—and Hermione laughed almost hysterically. "Mrs. Carlyon did not send me away; she is in Westshire with her son, and she believes me still in Harley-gardens."

Some people would have told their patient she must not talk so much, or perhaps even have urged her to go to sleep, but Margaret Ward was too true a nurse for that. She knew that the mind in Hermione's case was reacting on the body: once set the poor girl's brain at rest, and she would soon be better. To pour out her story and unburden her grief was her best panacea.

"My dear," said Margaret, quietly, "I am older than you. I am a plain old maid, and you are a beautiful girl; but I have known a great deal of sorrow in my life, and if you will tell me your troubles, I will do my best to help you. You may trust me fully."

"You won't betray me to the Carlyons?"

"I will not betray you to anyone in the world, not even my own mother."

And then Hermione sobbed out her story. She kept back nothing. From her father's sudden death to James Clifford's recognition of her on the Front at Brighton. She told it all.

"You poor girl! What you must have suffered!"

"It has been one long misery," said Hermione. "It has been as though my real self died, and I had been hiding under a stolen identity ever since."

"And you cannot trust the Carlyons? You do not think they would help you?"

Hermione turned even whiter than before.

"I am sure they would try to; but Miss Ward, the English law is on my husband's side. Don't you understand? He has committed no wrong that the law would count as an injury. He pretended to be a gentleman. He promised to save me from my relations, meaning the whole time to live upon their charity; but—the world would not count that as a crime."

"You would not go back to him? It is real dislike you feel to him?"

"May Heaven forgive me!" breathed Hermione; "it is worse than that. I fear and loathe him with all my heart. If he finds me and the law forces me to go back to him I would sooner throw myself into the river than live with him."

Margaret stroked the girl's soft hair with no unkindly touch.

"Most men are pretty bad," she observed thoughtfully, "but you seem to have picked up an extra black specimen."

Hermione shuddered.

"If only I had not believed in him. If only I were free—even though I knew I should have to work hard all my days—I should be quite happy."

"Work is not the hardship people make it out," said the nurse thoughtfully; "it is the best of disciplines for us all, and the only comfort for the unhappy."

"I have some money," said Hermione. "I had three hundred pounds when my father died, and I have spent very little. I could afford to live for months or even a year or two without a situation; but I should feel safer from—from my husband if I lived in someone else's house."

"Of course you would. Don't think me meddlesome, but, my dear child, why don't you tell your story to the Carlyons and let them help you?"

"I cannot"—she put up one hand to shield her face. "You know I have lived in their house. I have heard them discuss the strange disappearance of their cousin, Hermione. I have heard them suggest plan after plan for finding her and kept silence. How am I to go to them now and say that I am she?"

"There are ten days left of my holiday," said Nurse Ward, practically. "Will you promise me to stay at Rose Cottage till I leave it? It will be a little rest for you, and I may be able to think of some place to suit you."

"But—Mrs. Ward! How will she like a stranger foisted on her in your short holiday?"

"Mother likes whatever pleases me," said Margaret Ward. "I shall tell her that you are a friend of one of my patients, and that you are going to spend a few days here to rest. There is nothing mother loves more than petting people, and I know she will enjoy looking after you a little."

Mrs. Ward fulfilled her daughter's promise. If Hermione had been the child of an old friend, if she had been an invited guest, she could not have been made more welcome by the gentle, motherly old lady.

"You've worked a little too hard, dear," she told the girl when they sat alone together on Whit Monday afternoon, Margaret having gone to spend it with her brother's family, "and now you must just rest. There's nothing like rest for putting people right. I often tell Meg so, only she's wry and so doesn't quite believe me."

"You are so very kind," said Hermione, gratefully; "no one but you would be so kind to a stranger."

"Plenty of people would," said Mrs. Ward,

positively. "The world's not half so black as it's painted, my dear. And now, don't you worry about anything. Meg knows heaps of people, and I am sure she will soon find you a nice situation."

For Mrs. Ward believed firmly that Miss Brown had left Mrs. Carlyon through some unkindness of that lady, and fancied the girl was fretting over the difficulty of finding fresh employment.

"I am not a bit clever," said Hermione, "but I would do my best."

Oddly enough, it was Mrs. Ward and not her energetic daughter who finally found Hermione a new home.

"Dear me," said Margaret, looking up from a letter one morning. "Mrs. Jones is losing her nurse, and wants to find a lady to take care of Nell and teach her. Well, Nell must be nearly eight; so I suppose it's time she learned something. But she's so delicate, I can't fancy her given over to the care of some learned governess."

Nurse Ward was not attached to a hospital, but to a society which sent private nurses to attend on people in their own houses. She had been at this work ever since her training was completed; and she counted many friends among those who had been her patients.

"Mrs. Jones has only one child," explained Margaret to her mother—"a fragile, little being. I nursed her through diphtheria, and her mother thinks I saved her life. But Nell's so delicate Mrs. Jones must always feel anxious about her; and they'd had the nurse since she was a baby."

Mrs. Ward looked up quietly.

"That's the sort of thing to suit Miss Brown. One dear little girl to teach and look after, and no slights or worries."

It was quite impossible to explain to the dear old lady that Miss Brown had had no slights in Harley-gardens, and that the worries which came to her there were not of her employers' making.

Nurse Ward looked thoughtful.

"Would you like it?" she asked Hermione.

"Mrs. Jones is very pleasant, and I know she will treat her governess as a lady. But to be shut up with one child seems dreary work for a girl like you; and—you might fret."

"I would much rather live somewhere where I should not be expected to go in the drawing-room and see visitors," said Hermione. "I am not clever, but I know enough to teach a child of seven; and I would do my best."

Nurse Ward wrote to Mrs. Jones, and the answer came promptly. "Would Miss Brown call any morning between twelve and two; an interview was so much pleasanter than letters."

"They live at Baywater," explained the nurse.

"Mr. Jones is a stockbroker and very well off; his wife was a baronet's daughter and penniless; but you are not to think she married him for his money—they are just devoted to each other."

She was an old maid herself, or it might have struck her that it would be painful to a girl whose own marriage had been desperately unhappy, to live in daily intimacy with a husband and wife "devoted to each other."

"Will you come with me?" asked Miss Brown, eagerly.

The nurse shook her head.

"You will get on best alone. You and Mrs. Jones will understand each other much better without a third person." Then, seeing the look of terror on the girl's face—"my dear, are you afraid of meeting that man? (She never said your husband.) Take a cab from Victoria to Mrs. Jones's house; it will be less expensive than making yourself ill with fright."

Hermione thought a little sadly of the day when she interviewed Mrs. Nairn in Bloomsbury, but everything was different now. Mrs. Jones's luxurious house was as great a contrast to the quiet hotel as was this bright June morning to the bitter December day on which she had first seen Nellie.

Miss Jones—to quote her own expression when telling her husband of the governess—"took to" Miss Brown at once.

"I don't want anyone very clever or learned," she said, frankly; "nor anyone who would

always be regretting the gaffes she could not have. Nurse Ward tells me you have lost your father, and that you would be contented with a quiet life. If you come to us I will try and make you happy. Nell is our only child; and I think her father and I would do anything in the world for anyone who loved her."

"I will do my best to satisfy you if you will only try me," said Hermione. "I never was a governess before, but I was educated abroad, and I am a fair musician."

Perhaps it was Nell who decided the matter, for she manifested a great preference for Miss Brown, and Hermione's gentle manner with her impressed the mother very favourably.

"There is only one thing I ought to tell you," said Mrs. Jones, in rather a constrained way, "my widowed sister is here a great deal. I hope she will soon have a home of her own; but till she decides on one, she stays here whenever she comes to London. She has had a great deal of trouble. She has five little ones of her own—strong, healthy children, and she cannot quite understand how very fragile Nell is. I don't mean that she is unkind to my little girl, but she resents what she calls the fuss we make over her. If you come to us, Miss Brown, will you try and put up with my sister? I fear she may be rather trying; but it is only for a time. I shall look to you to keep Nell as much as possible away from her Aunt Sylvia. If you will only tell me if Mrs. Empson makes things uncomfortable for you I will set them right at once."

Hermione started. Mrs. Empson—Sylvia! Where had she heard those names before? Then she remembered Denis Carlyon's delirium. Recalled the story of his fair, false love, and understood that the lady who evidently would be the thorn in her path at Bayswater was the woman who had jilted her kinsman long years ago.

As she travelled back to Hayward's Heath her thoughts wandered often to Denis. What was he doing! Had he been surprised at her sudden departure? Had James Clifford called in Harley-gardens to claim his wife, and told the Carlyons that Mary Brown was their kinswoman? Somehow she thought not.

She would have given a great deal to know what happened after her flight, and whether the Carlyons thought her ungrateful.

Could she have seen Denis Carlyon's proceedings at that particular hour she would have been electrified.

Her cousin was in his own sanctum in the Temple with Mr. Norton at his right hand. Opposite them was James Clifford with a malignant scowl on his dark face.

"You do me the honour to offer me three hundred a-year to give up my wife," he said, bitterly. "You consider less than six pounds a week a sufficient recompense for the loss of the Honorable Mrs. Clifford's society. Well, I refuse your offer with all the contempt it deserves."

Norton looked at him coldly.

"Not so very long ago, Mr. Clifford, you thought five hundred a-year an ample income for yourself and wife. Lord Carlyon offers you more than half that sum to live as a bachelor."

"While he keeps my wife's fifty thousand pounds," said Clifford, angrily. "Oh, he is a deep one. Perhaps he thinks I don't know that her Australian uncle left her a fortune, and that he is sticking to it under the pretext he can't find her when she lived in his house for months."

"Lord Carlyon never knew the real name of his mother's companion until she had left his roof," said Mr. Norton, "and he was not aware till later still, that she was Mr. Home's niece. As to the fortune he will surrender it thankfully to Mrs. Clifford when he finds her."

"He could find her to-morrow."

"Well, you don't seem to find it such an easy task yourself," observed the lawyer.

"I haven't got a banker's account," sneered Clifford, "but mark my words, both of you, I will find my wife if she is above ground, and I shall share this precious fortune, and when Hermione and her money are once in my power won't I make my fine lady pay for her capers and airs."

"Leave the room," said Carlyon, shortly. "I

have made you a fair offer and you refuse it. I have nothing more to say."

Left alone with Mr. Norton the latter said, gravely.

"Of course Duncan told him about the fortune; but what was his object, he couldn't get a bribe from him."

"Revenge," said Carlyon. "Duncan hated me, and he knew Clifford would give me trouble. Then he had sworn long ago to be revenged on Hermione for her father's dismissal, and don't you see to do anything which led to Clifford's finding her would be the keenest vengeance he could imagine."

"Aye," and the lawyer's tone was solemn. "For my part that poor girl has made such a terrible bungle of her life that it seems to me all who love her would be glad to hear of her release. As far as human judgment can tell, only death can end the trials of Hermione."

But Carlyon would not agree to this. From his heart he hoped to see his beautiful cousin again, and by some bold stroke free her from the misery of her marriage.

(To be continued.)

## THE CURATE'S CHOICE.

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### CHAPTER I.

"Come, Grace, look sharp; here's father and the men waiting for their tea. Make some toast, and let them begin."

"Yes, mother."

She turned to the table and set to work, as one after another of the hungry men stalked through the hot kitchen to the cool dining-room beyond. With a heaping plateful in each hand, Grace followed.

She was neither very tall, nor very short, not too fat, but plump; her cheeks were red; her eyes were large and grey; there was a look in them as though their owner had resolved to keep all the complaints of life to herself; her hair was a soft brown and unusually heavy; her step had a square sound, which suggested she might be decided enough when necessary.

She poured out the tea, passed the food, and watched the men clear the table of edibles as she had hundreds of times before. It would be just the same to-morrow, and next day, and the next year. The washing and ironing, churning, baking, house-cleaning—all the other innumerable things farmers' wives and daughters have to do, alone of all housekeepers.

Ever since she could remember, except the brief two years at a distant boarding-school, she had been trying to lift the heavier part of the burden of overwork from her mother's shoulders. Not that she was ever seemingly conscious of it, but from her outlook it was one of the things that must be done, like eating or sleeping.

Not one of the men who sat at her father's table but felt vaguely the influence of this persistently self-sacrificing spirit. It was "Grace, pass me the pie," or "Grace, do this!" but they honoured her secretly.

"Mother, come now," she said, as the last man went out.

Then the two women sat down to their own tea. The mother was but the daughter with a sprinkling of silver in her hair, a form grown stout with years. She had been one of those women to whom the hard things of life come.

In her early youth her father had opposed her engagement to the young man of her choice. Their constancy had at last touched the parent's heart, and preparations were being hurried for their union. In a sudden and horrible way death snatched her lover from her.

Outwardly, life went on in the old way, but it was never the same to her. In due time she married a thrifty farmer, who looked on her in the light of a domestic machine. Her father was delighted to find her so sensible; he little knew the larger part of her life was in the grave of her seemingly forgotten lover. Her days were

one round of self-denial, and when Grace came she seemed to inherit the same spirit from her mother.

They lingered at the table a little, as they sometimes did, to chat.

"To-morrow we must get the front room ready for Eleanor. Poor Eleanor! It's a pity she's so slim. Then her father married again to a wife but a few years older than she is, and her mother not been dead quite a year. We must do all we can to make her happy while she's here, Grace."

"Yes," said Grace; but there was not much animation in her tone.

She was looking through the window at the far-away blue hills, and wondering if her cousin's coming would put an end to the weekly visits of the young curate.

At first when he came Grace and her mother had received him in state in the parlour; but one night there was a great outcry in the kitchen. They all rushed out, thereby revealing piles of unwashed dishes in the sink.

The boy had carelessly left the pails of foaming milk on the leaf of the table. The cat had added its weight, and the result was a general upset of table, pails, and cat.

After that the Rev. Mr. Ashford, who was an honest, keen-sighted young fellow himself—in former days a farmer's lad—insisted on taking a seat in the kitchen while Grace and her mother finished their work.

Then, through the long twilight they two strolled to the edge of the wood, or watched the moon rise over the eastern hills.

These evenings began to be very sweet to Grace. He had never said he loved her, but she hoped he would. Still she was not so sure of anyone else loving as of herself.

A few days later said Miss Haigh, the dress-maker, to her assistant, pretty Miss Maine—they lived in the village in which the Rev. Mr. Ashford preached,—

"It's the strangest thing to me what our new curate can see in that Grace to admire. I never saw such an odd, still thing as she is. Why there's no style in her! Last Sunday she, actually had on that polonaise I made for her over two years ago."

"I know it; and such a fright!" said Miss Maine, with alacrity.

She had not been quite indifferent to the young minister herself.

"Then," resumed Miss Haigh, "I was over at the Stanton's last night a full hour before that cousin came, and Grace never said a word to me that they expected anybody. I thought she was terribly dressed up and dainty for her, so, thinks I, I'll stay and see what's goin' to happen. I thought maybe Mr. Ashford was comin'. But no; when the six o'clock train came in, home come Mr. Stanton with a great trunk and the littlest mite of a girl you ever saw, with great brown eyes and a whole lot of yellow hair hanging over 'em. And the stylish dress she had on! And such an obligin', pretty way as she has! When I admired the cut of her overskirt she even offered to let me take it home to cut one by. I declare to gracious, I hope she'll just get the curate away from Grace. I haven't no patience with any one so close-mouthed as she is. And just then he come along in his trap, and he looked interested enough, but he didn't stop."

"Well," said Miss Maine, with a toss of her pretty head, "nobody cares, as I know of, who the curate flirts with. It's my opinion that's all he is doing."

Before Eleanor had been with the Stanton's a week her charming, pathetic little ways had won every heart down to that of Joe, the cart's boy. Grace brought her shawls and books, hung her hammock under the trees, then herself went back to the hot kitchen to prepare delicacies for the table.

Mrs. Stanton arose early and toiled late that Grace might have time to drive through the pleasant country roads with her.

Joe hunted wild flowers to lay at her feet, instead of doing his work, thereby rousing Mr. Stanton's ire.

And Eleanor very cheerfully accepted all the



homage. Indeed, all her life she had done the same.

The Rev. Mr. Ashford, too, fell under her sway. At first he had grumbled to Grace that their pleasant little chats should cease; then Grace reproved him and herself, especially as she felt the same regret.

Thereupon, to make amends for his selfishness—for he really was fond of Grace—he devoted as much time as possible to Eleanor's entertainment.

"Really, it is surprising how much satisfaction comes from duty performed," he thought.

But Grace was not exactly of that mind when she saw them riding away to visit this or that interesting locality.

Eleanor certainly found it more pleasing to ride in the curate's comfortable trap, with a handsome and intelligent young man, than rumbling along with Grace in the old dog-cart.

So the weeks of her stay passed. The night before her departure Mr. Ashford, who had called to bid her good-bye, was turning the leaves of her sketch-book, Eleanor making merry over some of her efforts. A photograph fell out which he hastened to recover. In so doing he found it to be a picture of himself which he had given Grace.

A pretty flush suffused Eleanor's face.

"Are you offended?" she said, with one of her pretty upward looks. "I wanted to pencil a head from it, and I didn't dare ask you. One has only to express a wish to Auntie or Grace and it is gratified. I am sure she never would have given this to me if she had thought me so awkward as to let you know about it."

So that was all the value Grace set on his picture. He remembered the look that had said a good deal to him when she received it. But how could she have been lately! It didn't occur to him that he had paid her but little attention since her cousin had been there.

The truth was, Eleanor had flattered him; but he had never thought of comparing her in point of real worth with Grace. Now he was in danger of losing Grace, if she had ever cared for him, which he doubted. Well, it was over, and he would make the best of it, thought the absurd fellow.

So when Grace came out and found him just relinquishing Eleanor's hand, and promising to see her during his trip to the town during the winter, there was no great cordiality lost between them.

## CHAPTER II.

AFTER Eleanor's departure, Grace rarely saw Mr. Ashford. All her sweet hopes had come to naught. Life went on in the old way, and yet not in the old way. She worked and slept and slept and ate just the same. She thought she had known all the turns of the old homely ways, but there was a strangeness that hurt her. The difference was all the time pricking her.

The winter passed, the winter's snows blocked them. The parson had taken his short vacation, but the Stantons had heard little of the happenings of the village.

An afternoon in December, when Mrs. Stanton and Grace were looking their worst, someone drove up to the door. Mrs. S— scuttled off for a clean dress, while Grace was obliged to face the curate. They sat down by the fire, Grace plunging at once into a conversation to cover her annoyance at her untidy dress. Strangely enough she was conscious of no other emotion.

Mrs. Stanton came in, and there were the customary greetings.

"Of course you have heard of your cousin's marriage!" he said. "I was much surprised when in town to be bidden to attend Miss Eleanor's wedding."

"Eleanor married!" ejaculated Mrs. Stanton, with a furtive glance at Grace.

She had seen her daughter's struggle, but had never hinted at it. Now her heart gave a leap. Perhaps Mr. Ashford had never cared for Eleanor, or she for him, and it might all come right in time.

Grace hastened to ask the particulars.

"A wealthy widower of advanced age," he answered, with a slight twinkle in his grey eyes. "There was a great display and a profusion of presents. The poor little bride looked tired, and I fancy life did not seem very charming to her at that minute. By the way, she sent a packet to you. It was something she could not entrust to the post, he said, and I must deliver it into your own hands."

Mr. Ashford spoke calmly.

"He has forgotten his tenderness for her," Grace thought. "How easily men forget!"

When he had gone she opened the packet. A note and Mr. Ashford's cabinet portrait fell out.

"Mother," she said, sharply, "here's the picture I lost! How could Eleanor have had it?"

"Your picture! Then Joe never took it to plague you!"

"Where is he?" said Grace. "I'll ask his forgiveness this minute for accusing him of it! But the letter."

It ran:—

"DEAR GRACE.—When you receive this I shall be Mrs. Melford, because Mr. Melford is rich, and my home now is disagreeable to me. How shocked you will be! I can see the colour rush to your face, and your grey eyes black with indignation; but pray wait, and I will tell you just how bad I have been, then you may despise me, as you will."

"But let me say first that I wanted happiness so much! Because crooked ways did not bring it to me, I cannot be quite so bad as to carry out the mean part I began. Last summer I saw the open secret that you and Mr. Ashford cared for each other. I admired your taste, and tried to draw him from you. I pleased him, but your greater strength of character had already won his heart."

"Because I could not win him I resolved to separate you. I knew him to be so proud and sensitive, as well as yourself, that a little slight would sting him."

"Well, I took your picture and let him understand that you gave it to me. You two, being only great children, did just as I planned. Well, I had my revenge; if you were small enough you might have yours now—all happiness is gone from my life. I have written Mr. Ashford a letter, telling him some of the story I now tell you; so I hope you two may understand each other. I made him promise not to read it until he had delivered this to you. You cannot forgive me, nor can I forgive myself."

"ELEANOR."

When Grace finished reading she placed the letter in her mother's hands. Her face was troubled. For once her resilience was broken.

"Mother, I think he never cared for me, or a foolish trifle like that could not have separated us. Oh, mother, she has done me an injury now I never can forgive, by meddling and humiliating me before him!"

She sobbed, as strong natures do when forced to break down. Mrs. Stanton was sorely distressed.

"Don't, Grace, don't!" her mother said, smoothing the soft brown hair.

Then she knelt by her side and kissed her. The silent kiss revealed more than words to Grace; for though there was perfect sympathy between them, they seldom bestowed caresses. Her sobs ceased at last.

"Mother, we will not speak of this again," she said, resolutely.

The next evening the curate's horse again drew up before the door. This time Grace looked very neat in a close-fitting black dress, simple white linen at her throat and wrists, and a bunch of rose-red ribbon that just matched her cheeks. The brown hair was arranged prettily, with a wavy fringe on her forehead. In her youth and strength she was fair to see.

Her greeting was not very cordial. What was said in the interview that he immediately asked will never be known; but when they came out they went straight to her mother, a happy light shining on both their faces.

"Will you give us your blessing?" he asked.

"May Heaven help you to bear and forbear with each other, and may the years draw you more closely together!" Mrs. Stanton responded, solemnly, the tears springing to her eyes as the memories of her own youth stirred in her heart.

Then Mr. Stanton, who was snoring on the sofa, woke up to see who was disturbing his nap. Mr. Ashford chose to tell him at once. He was as much moved as it was possible for him to be.

"Yes, yes, you'll have a good wife if she's as loving and faithful as her mother's been to me."

Then he relapsed into another nap, quite unconscious that there ever was a gap in his wife's life he had not filled.

I need not tell you how sweetly Grace filled the position of a country curate's wife, for she was a genuine English girl, ready to adapt herself to any position.

## THE UNCLE'S SECRET.

—302—

### CHAPTER XXXVIII.

IT was ten o'clock when Harold Lexmore returned to his hotel. He lighted the gas-jet, and the first object his eyes rested upon was the white envelope addressed to himself.

He tore it open wonderingly, noticing that it had no postmark, and concluding it must have been sent by a special messenger by some one in the city.

His wonder increased as he saw that the page bore the printed letter-head of the hotel. The missive was evidently from someone in the house.

He smoothed out the page indifferently enough; but the first sentence that caught his eye held him spell-bound. A red mist swept before him; the veins on his forehead stood out like knotted cords, and the strong hands that held the letter trembled like leaves in a wind, while his handsome face grew pale as death.

He drew a long, quivering breath; his lips trembled. Constance, whom he had mourned as dead three long, weary years, alive—and in the person of Miss Christie! Great Heaven! it could not be; it was some jest. He was astounded, amazed, dismayed. Miss Christie, the beautiful girl he had learned to love with all the passionate love of his heart, was Connie—poor, little, despised Connie! He could scarcely realise it; yet, as he read on with breathless interest, there was no room left for doubt in his mind.

The shock was terrible to him. Constance under the same roof with him? He read slowly, carefully, each line on the written pages—the confession of her great love for him, and the pitiful temptation that had followed on the heels of it.

Harold Lexmore's head fell forward on his breast, and as bitter a sob as ever left man's lips died on his. Great drops of anguish stood out on his brow. What could the closing lines of that piteous letter mean! Like a flash the terrible import of the words came to him. Great Heaven! was he too late to save his beautiful, innocent darling!

Like one mad he sprang from his chair, giving the bell-rope a violent pull. Only Heaven knew what he suffered. When they answered the hasty summons they found Harold Lexmore standing in the middle of the room with a face haggard as death, while the letter he held clutched in his hand was wet with tears. He was labouring under some great excitement.

"Miss Christie! Go to her room at once!" he gasped, incoherently, and the letter fell unheeded from his nerveless fingers.

At that moment Doctor Jolly entered his friend's room.

He saw at once by the group of excited attendants about Harold Lexmore that something unusual had transpired.

He picked up the crumpled sheet, smoothed it out, and ran his quick eye over the page.

His face grew white as marble. In a single instant he had mastered its contents and he under-

stood all. He and his friend were rivals for the love of a beautiful girl; their friendship was over for evermore. But it was a useless rivalry on his part, for, by her own confession, her heart was given long since to his rival, Harold Lexmore.

He read, too, with a thrill of horror, the closing lines of that letter; but he was quick to act, and in less than a moment, guided by the frightened housekeeper and attendants, he had made his way to Constance's boudoir.

But here a new difficulty presented itself; the door was securely fastened upon the inside. Yet not a moment was to be lost. A deathly silence, which made the doctor's heart fairly quake with fear, reigned in the interior of the room.

The key was upon the inside of the lock. But one course presented itself—they must force the door.

Strong shoulders were brought to bear on the heavy-oaken panels; it quivered an instant on its hinges, then fell in with a crash.

In an instant Doctor Jolly had bounded over the threshold and was kneeling beside the silent figure on the couch.

A strong, pungent odour filled the room. The phial which the doctor had picked up and examined solved the mystery. It was a sleeping potion, not necessarily dangerous, he explained to them.

And the maid whispered to the doctor and the housekeeper how she had substituted valerian, fearing something of that sort when the beautiful young stranger had pleaded with her to bring her a phial of laudanum.

"Your prudence has saved her life," said the young Doctor, gravely.

He chafed the white, ice-cold hands. How he yearned to take her in his arms just once and kiss her for the first and last time!

The sweet face, the tender lips were not for him, yet he loved her with the whole passion and force of his soul, and at that moment he almost hated the fair handsome rival who had won Constance Culver's heart.

Yet, William Jolly, being the very soul of honour, put the thought from him. The idol he had adored in his heart was shattered. He must leave her at once and never more look upon her face until he could think of her calmly.

Constance had fallen into a deep sleep from which all attempts to awaken her had proved futile. It was induced not so much by the draught she had taken as great mental excitement followed by exhaustion.

An hour later William Jolly sought Harold Lexmore's room. He found him pacing up and down in the most intense excitement.

"She has taken nothing injurious. Your fears were groundless," he said, in answer to the anxious questions with which he was pled ere he had crossed the threshold; but I would not advise you to attempt to see the young lady for a week at least. Her nerves would not admit of a sudden shock such as your presence would be to her."

Something in the young Doctor's voice caused Harold Lexmore to pause and glance up at him wonderingly.

"I thank you for doing what you have for her," he said, holding out his hand. "You read the letter, my dear Jolly. You know all."

The Doctor drew back coldly from the proffered hand.

"I can never clasp your hand in friendship again," he said, chokingly, "for—Heaven help me!—we both love the same girl, and her heart has been given to you, it seems, long ago. I can understand now why I could not win her."

Harold Lexmore was too shocked for words.

"Doctor Jolly loved Constance too! When and where had they met, and how! Then he remembered the words of Constance's letter, that she had been taken to the Doctor's home for treatment when she had been so miraculously rescued from a watery grave.

"Must the friendship of long years be thus rudely severed?" asked Harold Lexmore, sadly.

William Jolly turned his pale, handsome face haughtily away.

"There can be no friendship between two men who are unfortunate enough to love the same woman. I make no pretence of it. From this

hour we are as strangers. You have been my evil genius; it seems. I hope I may never see your face again."

He rose abruptly, and taking his hat, left the room without one backward glance, and the friendship of years was broken, never to be bridged over while they lived.

Within an hour Doctor Jolly left the hotel and city.

Constance had the best of medical attendance, however; yet for a whole week, that seemed the length of eternity to the impatient young lover, he was not permitted to enter the sick-room.

Mrs. Brook, the old housekeeper at Lexmore Hall, had been telegraphed for at once, and great was the consternation and rejoicing at the Hall when the wonderful news, that seemed so like a romance to them, was made known, that Constance had not died that night she died so mysteriously from Lexmore Hall.

Mrs. Brook could hardly believe that the beautiful, golden-haired young girl, with a face as perfect as a marble Flora, was indeed poor, pretty, capricious little Connie when she first gazed upon her.

Three years had made marvellous changes for the better in her.

"Oh, my poor, pretty little darling," she sobbed, holding the girl close in her arms, "why did you run away from poor Mr. Harold, and break your solemn betrothal vow! And where have you been these three long years while we mourned you as dead?"

Mrs. Brook's great grief was that Constance was too ill to recognise her.

Eagerly Harold Lexmore begged admittance to the sick-room; but Mrs. Brook's refusal him point-blank.

"Not until after she has talked with—" the rest of the sentence was whispered in his ear. "That will be best, Mr. Harold," she declared.

"Well, when will that be?" he asked, with great impatience.

"To-day, we hope," was the encouraging reply.

The golden sunshine was flooding the pretty lace-draped boudoir with a flood of softened, mellow light, and the air, sweet as the perfumes of Araby, was heavy with the fragrant odour of roses as Constance opened her wondering eyes with the light of consciousness in them and gazed in bewilderment at the group of faces about her couch.

Her eyes fell first upon Mrs. Brook, and she held out her arms to her like a tired child.

It was a pathetic sight to see the old housekeeper clasp her in her arms, laughing and crying over her in a breath.

Suddenly Constance's arms fell from about her, and she buried her face in the pillow with a bitter cry.

"Oh, you must not touch me—indeed you must not!" she sobbed. "Heaven help me! I remember all now. Oh, why did Heaven spare me! Oh, Winnie! Winnie! Winnie!"

Some one stepped out from the shadow of the heavy draperies, bent over the grief-convulsed figure, and drew the white hands resolutely away from her tear-stained face.

"Connie!" whispered a strangely familiar voice. "Connie!"

For one moment a death-like silence ensued. Then Connie raised her eyes to the face bending over her.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

It was an intensely thrilling moment.

The silence of death ensued as Connie raised her eyes to the face bending over her—raised her dazed eyes to the face of Winnie Kinder!

"Not dead!" she gasped, in mortal terror. "Oh, Heaven help me! Joy will drive me mad! Oh, Winnie is not dead!"

Winnie looked at her in wonder.

"You act as though you took me for a ghost," she said. Then a tenderer light came into her eyes as she beheld the rapture on the upturned face. "I believe you would have been sorry,

Constance, if I had shuffled off this mortal coil. But what made you imagine I had died!"

The pallor of Connie's face as she fell back shudderingly on the pillow was heart-rending. Mrs. Brook answered the question for Connie.

"Why, you know you were quite ill at the hospital, Winnie, when Connie saw you last. Poor Connie was exhausted watching beside you, so much so that she fell asleep while watching, so Doctor Jolly says. He had gone into the room to get his medicine-case, at midnight, at the time of the crisis, and was just in time to give you your potion himself. As he looked at Connie's white face, exhausted with long watching, he told himself unless she rested at once that he would have two patients on his hands instead of one."

It was to Winnie Mrs. Brook addressed the words; but she knew poor hapless Connie would understand her meaning, and Connie did understand, and the most thankful cry that ever went out from human lips broke from her.

At that moment she could have knelt at Doctor Jolly's feet and kissed the hands that had saved her own from a stain that could never be washed away.

The eyes of Connie and the old housekeeper met, and Connie knew that Mrs. Brook knew all.

"Will you leave me alone with Connie a few moments, Mrs. Brook?" asked Winnie. "I have something to say to her."

The housekeeper turned and slowly quitted the room.

Then Winnie flung herself down on her knees by Connie's couch.

"Mrs. Brook tells me that you are under the impression that I am Harold Lexmore's wife," she said, in a low, unsteady voice. "I must correct the error at once; I am not his wife, Connie."

She did not heed the cry of astonishment that broke from her listener's lips, that had grown white as death, but went on hurriedly—

"He never really loved me, Connie; it was only a boyish fancy. From the night you fled from Lexmore Hall and threw yourself into the river, he was never the same. The change in the man I worshipped so fondly maddened me. I accused him of caring for you, and the answer he made me went like a dagger through my heart—it made me a fiend incarnate."

"You are right, Winnie," he answered, "I do love Connie, no other woman shall ever take her place in my heart. I admit to you frankly that while we were plighting our troth at the major's bedside such an idea as loving her never entered my head. No man cares for a prospective bride who has been forced upon him, as Connie was. But the moment my heart did awaken to the truth and to the power of a mighty passionate love was the moment poor Connie confronted us as you and I, Winnie, stood clasped in each other's arms bemoaning the fatal betrothal that had put us asunder. The pitiful cry the poor child uttered, and her words—

"Heaven help me, Harold Lexmore! I thought you loved me as dearly as I love you!" went to my heart."

"As dearly as I love you." Those words thrilled me like an electric shock, and then there my heart went out to Connie. While I live I shall kiss no other woman's lips. Ah, Winnie, that solemn betrothal was broken because your fair face came between me and my pledge."

"That was the answer he made me, Connie," she went on, sobbingly, "and Harold and I parted then and there. That was three long years ago, and I have never seen him since until last week; he came to see me at the hospital when I was ill. He came again yesterday, begging me to come and see you, Connie, and tell you how matters were, and to tell you he had read the letter you wrote him, and that he was coming to see you as soon as the doctor would permit him to do so."

To describe the emotion that filled Connie's heart as she listened to Winnie's recital, the hope, the joy, the yearning cry of her very soul for the lover who had been so true to her memory, even though he believed his love for her had come into his heart too late, would take a cleverer pen than mine.

"There is something else I have to tell you,



Connie" went on Winnie, in a low, husky voice—"a secret that has been weighing my heart down, wearing my life out—the reason why Major Lexmore wished to see you the betrothed bride of Harold Lexmore, his heir, as he passed away."

With penitent tears Winnie confessed to the dastardly deed she had done in personating Connie during the major's last moments; while he, believing her to be Connie, had whispered a startling revelation into her ears, bidding her take the silver key from the chain about his neck, and after he was dead to search in the old iron-bound chest in the tower for the proof of what he had said. The papers were there.

"At the first opportunity I secured them," continued Winnie, "and I found out then why he was so anxious that a betrothal should take place between you and his son. Are you too weak to listen, Connie?" asked Winnie. "It is a startling story."

"No, no! Go on, I pray you!" gasped Connie, clutching at her heart with one hand and the other seeking Winnie's, as if in token of forgiveness for what she had done.

"I will tell it briefly," said Winnie. "You have heard the story of how the Major's wife, Harold's mother, died in his early infancy," she said; "and you have heard, too, that the Major's heart was buried in his wife's grave. That was the reason the world gave out why he never married again."

"Yes," responded Connie.

"It was quite false. The world was cheated of a great sensation then, for Major Lexmore did marry again, though the secret was well hidden from the knowledge of all men."

"Harold was three years of age when his mother died. Seven years later the Major met and loved a fair-haired little widow whose worldly possessions were a beautiful face, an empty purse, and a little daughter of two summers."

"The Major's wooing culminated in a speedy marriage, and for a few short months life, youth, love, and happiness bloomed anew for the Major. There came a terrible ending. In a steamboat accident the Major's wife lost her life, and he was left to mourn; and with the little child his wife had left, he started back to Lexmore Hall."

"But en route he changed his mind. Why tell the world he had married again, and the tragic fate of his lovely young wife? He could not bear the thought that the deepest and sorest wound of his life should be laid bare before the world. Better eternal silence than that."

"He took his young wife's child to a relative who lived in Dover. Ah! you start, Connie, the truth bursts upon you. Yes, you were that child, Connie. Major Lexmore was your stepfather; but he loved you with a passion that was almost pain, because you were his lost Eunice's only child."

"He made over half his fortune to you, Connie, and the dearest wish of his heart was that in after years his son Harold should wed with his Eunice's child."

"He had a monomania upon the subject, brooding over it by night and by day. As the years went by I believe that he regretted not having made known his second marriage, and that you, Constance Culver, was his stepdaughter, heiress to half his estate."

"Harold would not all this straight in good time," he told himself.

"When he told his son that he had a bride already selected for him, the young man flatly refused to fall in with his father's plans, declaring that he was capable of choosing his own wife when he was ready to marry."

"A stormy scene ensued, and to make matters worse, hot-headed Harold declared that he would not marry his father's ward, whoever she was, if every hair of her head was hung with gold, and that he was fully prepared to hate her on sight. It was then that the Major disinherited his son, turning him from Lexmore Hall. The papers which deeded half of the Lexmore estate to you I found, just as the Major had said, in the old iron-bound chest."

"I thought no one else knew of their existence; but it seemed that George Grenfell, an ex-secretary of the major, knew of them, and one night, when

I went down to the river to cast the papers into its depths, this man surprised me there and took the papers from me."

"If Constance Culver is an heiress, I will marry her if I can!" he cried, with an exultant laugh.

"With the news of your death, the man disappeared; though a year later all the papers, intact were sent to the lawyer who has charge of the late major's estates. None knew from whence they came, and at last they were given in charge of Harold Lexmore."

"Say that you forgive me, Connie," she added, in conclusion. "I know that I tried to lure Harold from you, and the prophecy that I'll always follow those who interfere in a betrothal, has come home to me."

"I have not been happy, I am wretched now. I will not attempt to stain my lips with false words by pretending that I do not love Harold Lexmore still, for I do; but his heart is yours, Connie."

"But for me you would have been his bride three long years ago, and that death-bed betrothal solemnly fulfilled."

"Let those take warning who would interfere and put asunder those who are bound to each other by solemn vows!"

With these words Winnie kissed her and hurriedly quitted the room.

## CHAPTER XL.

WINNIE KENDER's thrilling narrative produced a wonderful effect upon Connie. When Mrs. Brook returned she found her weeping for very joy. The housekeeper could well understand why, but all she said was—

"You see, my dear, Harold has loved you from the first better than you knew."

The clinging pressure of Constance's hands answered her.

From that moment her improvement was rapid; perhaps it was heightened by the knowledge that Harold Lexmore was under the same roof with her. How her heart beat at the thought!

Two days later she was so far recovered as to sit at the window in a great willow rocker.

Mrs. Brook had taken much pains with Connie's toilet that day, declaring it made her think of old times to see pretty Miss Connie robed in a dress of spotless white. She had crimson roses on her breast and in the meshes of her bouy golden curls, while her beautiful dark eyes shone with unworldly brilliancy, and a flush, delicate as the pink tint of a seashell, deepened in her round, dimpled cheeks.

Mrs. Binnie and Felicia Dale had been sent for by Harold to help plead his cause with Connie before he should see her; and both came at once, and both did their best in Harold's interest. But if they had not spoken one word in his favour the result would have been the same, for the most powerful agent of all was pleading for him—Connie's own glad, throbbing heart.

That afternoon Mrs. Binnie and Felicia Dale made innumerable excuses to leave Connie alone—even Mrs. Brook picked up her sewing, declaring that she must enjoy the sunshine in the garden below, and that Connie should call her if she needed her—she would be within calling distance, in case she was wanted.

So Connie—our pretty, blushing Connie—sat by the rose-embowered window alone. Alone, did I say! Well, I don't mean quite that; she had the happiest companions about her that ever cheered a young girl's heart—her own sweet thoughts—for they were sweet. She was thinking of handsome Harold Lexmore, and wondering if Heaven really meant to give her so much happiness as his love. She was wondering how she would greet him—what words she should use. Her heart beat and her hands trembled at the thought.

The door opened softly; a tall figure stood upon

"THE HUMAN HAIR: Its Restoration and Preservation." A Practical Treatise on Baldness, Greyness, Superficial Hair, &c. 40 pages. Post-free six stamps, from Dr. HORN, Hair Specialist, Bournemouth.

the threshold, his heart in his eyes, as he watched the slender figure in the window.

He crossed the room softly and stood beside her.

Connie was looking dreamily from the window, wondering why the sunlight at that moment seemed to take on a more golden hue, why the birds singing in the branches without seemed so joyous as they looked at her with their bright, knowing eyes, and why her heart had commenced to beat with a rapture so sweet and keen it was almost pain.

She turned round uneasily and then she saw him.

Harold Lexmore was standing beside her with extended arms, and a light on his handsome fair face that she had never seen there before.

"Connie, my darling!" he whispered, softly.

With a little quivering cry she rose to her feet, and the next moment Harold Lexmore's strong arms enfolded her, the beautiful golden head was pillowed upon his throbbing heart, and love's passionate kisses were pressed upon the lovely quivering mouth and the fair sweet face.

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It was quite an hour before Mrs. Binnie and Felicia Dale returned, and when they saw Harold Lexmore and pretty, shy, blushing Connie sitting on the couch by the window together, his arm about her slender waist, it was easy for them to surmise Connie had not mislead them.

What they said in that sweet hour of reconciliation we can only guess; all lovers use the same beautiful language.

Harold Lexmore led Connie up to where his aunt stood smiling upon them.

"Connie has promised to become my wife," he said, simply.

The next moment Connie was sobbing happy tears upon Mrs. Binnie's breast, while her hands were clasped in Felicia Dale's.

Connie made no proud, stately bride to reign at Lexmore Hall. She was simply sweet and good, and her adoring young husband loved her all the better for it.

They took no tour abroad. Harold took his bride back to Lexmore Hall, and it would have brought tears to eyes least used to them to see how they welcomed her at the grand old Hall—beautiful Connie who had been returned to them so strangely. Mrs. Brook accompanied them back to the hall.

Two persons read the notice of their marriage, with white faces and bitter pain in their hearts: one, a young doctor, worn and haggard, sitting in his office far into the midnight hour. He took a faded blossom from his pocket, tore it sorrowfully into shreds, and flung it to the breeze.

"Thus do I tear your image from my heart, sweet Connie," he said, sadly. "I pray Heaven that the choice you have made will prove a happy one."

Never from that day was William Jolly known to look kindly upon a woman's face.

The other one who read the notice of their marriage was Winnie Kinder. She remembered how she had tried to part them, and failed so ignominiously, and a sigh broke from her lips for the lover whom she had lost.

Harold Lexmore and his bride are happy now, and the betrothal, which was broken for the sake of a fair, false woman, has been cemented by the marriage-bond.

[THE END.]

THE race of mankind would perish did they cease to aid each other. From the time that the mother binds the child's head, till the moment some assistant wipes the death-damp from the brow of the dying, we cannot exist without mutual help. All, therefore, that need aid have a right to ask it from their fellow-mortals. No one who holds the power of granting it can refuse it without guilt.

STICK TO THE PROGRAMME.—When you have fixed upon a plan, even in comparatively trivial matters, do not reverse or vary it, except for good reason. Decision of character will thus in time become habitual; and habit has well been described as second nature. The power of the will can be cultivated, and there is nothing more deserving the attention of young men. At the same time decision of character should not be confounded with the unreasoning obstinacy which is rather the characteristic of the donkey than of an intelligent human being.

BEAUTY.—All beauty must be organic. It is the soundness of the bones that ultimates itself in a peach-bloom complexion, health of constitution that makes the sparkle and power of the eye. It is the adjustment of the size and of the joining of the sockets of the skeleton that gives grace of outline and the finer grace of movement. Every necessary organic action pleases the beholder. A man leading a horse to water, a farmer sowing seed, the labours of haymakers in the field, the carpenter building a ship, the smith at the forge, or whatever useful labour is becoming to the wise eye; but, if it is done to be seen it is simply neither more nor less than menage.

## LOST YOUTH.

A STRAIN like songs of dying swans—  
A fragment of forgotten rhyme—  
A vision of the ghostly dawn  
That wake me in the olden time  
To hopeless love and cruel scorn  
And thoughts of unforgiven crime—

Thus come the memories of the past,  
With faded light and smothered joys;  
With daring hopes too bright to last,  
And peals of fame now empty noises;  
With high aspirations, grand and vast,  
My hopeless soul no more enjoys.

Like Indian summer's aure air,  
And music heard in holy dreams—  
Like voices lost in silent prayer  
And murmurings of distant streams—  
Come back those days when life was fair,  
With muffled sounds and hazy gleams.

Within my soul the memory preys;  
My lost youth was a dream of fame,  
Those half-forgotten wilder days  
When I, too, sought to win a name,  
Give but the phantom sounds of praise—  
The knell of what I fain would claim.

THE sum of £1,000,000 would not be an extravagant estimate of the Queen's china at Buckingham Palace and at Windsor, considering that the Sevres dessert service in the Green Drawing room at Windsor is valued at £100,000. There are six Sevres vases at Buckingham Palace, for which there would be an eager competition if they were put up to-morrow at £30,000.

By a process which is carefully guarded, something new in the working of sheet metal has been produced. Steel sheets are coated with aluminium. It is claimed that these are superior to and more durable than galvanized iron, tin plate, or planished iron, for many purposes for which those materials are now generally used. The special advantages of such aluminium-coated sheets are stated to be that they can be worked and seamed without peeling; the coating, adhering absolutely to the sheet, can be easily soldered, will resist the action of sulphurous gases, and can be heated to a red heat without destroying the coating. Moreover, such sheets can, when desired, be polished to a lustre equal to burnished silver or nickel. An absolutely smooth and evenly-covered surface is presented, free from imperfections of any kind. Aluminium-coated sheets, plated with copper, are also produced, and these also take a high polish.

SCIENTISTS are speculating on the causes of some water currents that have been for centuries uninterruptedly flowing into some unknown receptacles far beneath the surface of the earth. These currents are continuous, and could not, of course, be merely filling an unoccupied space. That there must be an outlet as well as an inlet is evident from the enormous quantity of water which is perpetually pouring through these openings in the limestone ledges. After exhausting all other theories, it is argued that the influx of water may be caused by the tremendous volcanic heat in some subterranean cavern, the heated water flowing out at some point more or less distant. This volcanic and subterranean heating was spoken of some years ago as furnishing a plausible theory as to the causes of the high temperature of the Gulf Stream. If, as is generally supposed, the interior of the earth is in a condition of intense heat the water that flows into fissures and crevices in the surface of the earth must come out somewhere either in steam or hot water. Hot springs and the Gulf Stream are perfectly reasonable phenomena when viewed from this standpoint.

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FAOETIÆ.

"I FANCY she calls it *début*, because *début* sounds foreign." "But it doesn't when she speaks it."

"You are destined to marry riches," the pipay said; "but—" "But what?" "Death will claim you two years before the event."

THE difference between the astronomer and the chorus girl is that one studies the stars, and the other understudies them.

"A MAN who will wear such a suit of clothes must be deficient in taste." "Taste! Why, he must be hard of hearing."

A WOMAN in humble life, returning from church, was asked if she understood the sermon. "Wud I hae the presumption?" she simply replied.

ROBERT: "Is Harry fond of female society?" Richard: "Immoderately. I've known him to play whist with three women."

REGGY: "I hear Cholly has concussion of the brain." Algy: "Yass, poor chap, two twains of thought collided."

LORD DEDBROKE: "Our patent of nobility dates back five hundred years." Miss Goldrox: "I thought it must have run out some time ago."

DYER: "What is your business, may I ask?" Boorish Stranger: "I am a gentleman, sir. That's my business." "Ah, you have failed, I see."

DUSTY DICK: "Say, boss, ain't yer got er shillin' for a poor blind chap?" Old Gentleman: "Why, you're only blind in one eye." Dusty Dick: "All right, boss; make it sixpence."

SEE: "If I marry you, you must give up smoking and drinking and your club." He: "Yes." She: "And what else are you willing to give up?" He: "You."

EMPLOYER: "I thought you wanted to go to your grandmother's funeral this afternoon?" Office Boy: "Please, sir, it was postponed on account of wet grounds."

"GEORGE, you do not love me." "How can you say such a thing when I've kissed you thirty times in ten minutes?" "If you really loved me you would not have counted the kisses."

"I UNDERSTAND that you have joined the literary brotherhood?" "Yes," replied Lovelace. "I am now writing for a living." And he dashed off another begging letter to his father.

"SEE, Jessie, Miss Houghton and Captain Ferrara are teaching Sister Alice to ride a wheel." After a pause. "Yes; but ma, why does Sister Alice always fall off on Captain Ferrara's side?"

FRIEND: "How are you getting along?" Seedy author: "Good. I've got the material in hand for a splendid comedy." "You are fortunate." "Yes; all I need now is the material for a new pair of trousers."

THE RETURNED PARISHIONER.—"And how is dear Mr. Poundbook's cough? Is it any better?" The Homekeeping Parishioner: "It got so bad that we sent him on a trip to Palestine. Just about now it is safe to say that his bark is on the sea."

FAMILY FRIEND: "I congratulate you, my dear sir, on the marriage of your daughter. I see you are gradually getting all the girls off your hands." Old Olivebranch: "Off my hands—yes; but the worst of it is, I have to keep their husbands on their feet."

SLIGHTLY AMBIGUOUS.—Mr. Ponder: "I have some ideas upon the cure of insomnia which I think of writing out." Miss Cheever: "Oh, do! Anything you write upon the subject, I am sure, must have a decided tendency to relieve one from that terrible disease."

"It's surprising how impractical some very learned men are." "Yes; there's Professor Lingvist, for example. He spent over half his life in acquiring fluency in nine or ten different languages, and then went and married a wife who never gives him a chance to get a word in edgewise."

A YOUNG WOMAN who has never learned the gentle art of cookery, being desirous of impressing her husband with her knowledge and diligence, manages to leave her kitchen door ajar on the day after their return from their bridal trip, and, just as her lord comes in from the office, exclaims, loudly: "Hurry up, Elsie, do! Haven't you washed the lettuce yet? Here, give it to me; where's the soap?"

"YOUNG man," said the parson, "I hope you never go to horse-races." "No, sir." "That's right. There is nothing that leads to ruin faster. You lose your time, your money, and your sense of honour. You are thrown in contact with the lowest, and you have nothing to look back upon except a life full of regrets. Keep away from the racecourse." "Yes, sir; and, besides, what's the use of going right out there when there are so many bookies in town?"

HE was a thin, fragile, young preacher, but not half so helpless as he looked. He could see and hear what was going on, even during the last prayer. Just before the very closing service, he said, calmly, but with a good deal of impressiveness to the square inch,—"Those of the congregation that did not get their things all on during the prayer, can do so while I pronounce the benediction," during which, however, the audience could hear each other's watches tick.

"OH, I CAN'T SING," pleaded a young man, who femininely wanted to be coaxed before gratifying his auditors. "Yes, you can. I've heard two or three of your friends say so," persisted a pretty girl to whom he had been talking. "No, I can't," he repeated, getting up to go to the piano. "Yes, you can. Go on, now, and sing," she urged. He said he couldn't two or three times more, but he went ahead, and for half an hour his voice was the most prominent thing in the room. Then he came back smiling to the young lady. "Ah," she said, wearily, "thanks. You were quite right about the singing." His face clouded, and he never spoke again to the girl who agreed with him.

SWEET GIRL (in a boat): "What is this place in the back of the boat for?" Nice Young Man: "That is to put an oar in when you want to scull the boat. Rowing requires both oars, one on each side; but in sculling only one is used. That is placed at the back and is worked with one hand." Sweet Girl (after meditation): "I wish you would try sculling for a time."

FIRST MERCHANT: "Say, Byers, you always have such a pretty typist. Do you select her for her beauty?" Second Merchant: "Yes, indeed! It pays. You see, before I got on to the scheme my three clerks would stay away on the least provocation. Now, they have fallen dead in love with her, and not one of them stays away if he can possibly help it, for fear the others will get ahead of him."

A SHOPMAN was showing a lady some parcels. He had a good command of language, and knew how to expatiate on the good qualities and show the best points of the goods. As he picked up a parcel from the lot on the counter and opened it, he struck an attitude of admiration, and, holding it up, said, "Now, there, isn't it lovely? Look at that silk. Particularly observe the quality, the finish, the general effect. Pass your hand over it," he said, as he handed it to the lady. "Isn't it a beauty?" "Yes," said the lady, "that's my old one. I just laid it down there."

A SHORT time ago, not many miles from Newcastle, some men were discussing vegetarians. A pitman happened to be passing, and seeing some of his mates in the group, came forward and asked what they were talking about. "Vegetarians," said one of the men. "What's them?" said Geordie. "Why, fellows that don't eat any meat," replied the man. "Well, now," said Geordie, "I once knew a man that never eat anything but fish in his life, and a stronger man never went down the pit!" "Well, then, he must have been a vegetarian!" said the man. "Vegetarian be blowed!" said Geordie. "He was born and bred at Hebburn!"

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## SOCIETY.

THE German Emperor will pay a visit to the King of the Belgians at Ostend about September 10th. He will arrive in the *Hohenzollern*, and will be accompanied by three other ships of war.

THE approved design for the new *Victoria and Albert* is now practically complete. The future Royal yacht is to be thirty feet shorter, two feet less beam, eighteen inches less draught, and of three knots less speed than in the original design. With an eighteen-foot draught she will be able to go alongside most piers and jetties—no slight consideration.

THE Marchioness of Lorne has been seriously devoting herself to yet another branch of art—namely, architecture, in which she bids fair to be very successful, for the wing to the little Highland Inn, for which the Princess has made the designs, is said to be exceedingly charming. The sign-board will, by and by, become an art treasure, for it is to be painted by Princess Louise herself.

THE base of the new sarcophagus in the Battenberg Memorial Chapel is composed of white dove marble, the panels above are of pure white statuary marble, and they bear the Arms of the Orders of the Prince and Princess carved in perfect detail. The altar-table, constructed of dove and statuary marble, is approached by polished steps. Above the table is to be erected the figure of an angel with outstretched wings which will stand about eight feet high and occupy the greater portion of the east end. The Marchioness of Lorne is now engaged upon this work.

THE Emperor and Empress of Russia are to spend the first week of September in Denmark with King Christian and Queen Louise, after which they will proceed direct to Darmstadt, and they are to reside for several weeks at Schloss Seebeln, a beautiful place on the Bergstrasse, which belongs to the Grand Duke of Hesse, who has lent it to his brother-in-law. The house has been enlarged, redecorated, and refurbished during the last few months. Seebeln is within a short distance of Heiligenberg, the domain of Prince Louis of Battenberg, so that the Empress will be able to see a great deal of her sisters, Princess Louis and Princess Henry of Prussia, who are to stay there while the Russian sovereigns are at Seebeln.

THE influence of the young Tsaritsa, ever silently exerted in the cause of reform and enlightened progress, is already being felt in more directions than one. The Tsar, as is well-known, has the greatest confidence in her judgment, and attaches the utmost weight to her advice on all questions relating to the amelioration of the condition of the people in his vast Empire. Thus, for instance, we read that an order has just been issued declaring it illegal to make young persons of either sex under fifteen years of age work at trades for more than eight hours in any one day, or for more than four consecutive hours without an interval of rest.

PETERBORO, where the Emperor and Empress of Russia are to receive the German Emperor and Empress, and also President Faure, has been the favourite summer residence of the Imperial Court ever since the reign of Peter the Great. The vast palace, built of granite and marble, painted in red and white, with a gorgeous iron roof and many gilded domes, stands on a cliff, overlooking the Gulf of Finland. The rooms are sumptuously decorated and furnished in the style of the last century, and the palace is crammed with pictures, tapestry, china, malachite, *biscuiterie*, and curios of all kinds, including many historical relics. The Red room contains nearly four hundred portraits of beautiful women in all parts of Russia, this collection having been made by Count Rotari for Catherine II. The gardens are the great feature at Peterhof, with terraces sloping away to the sea, and every conceivable description of fountain, besides temples, columns, Palladian bridges and toy mills. The "Sampson" fountain represents him opening the lion's jaws, from which spouts a jet nearly ninety feet in height.

## STATISTICS.

ONLY two Englishwomen in every 100 now wear earrings.

DURING the 21 years that the White Star steamer *Germanic* has been in active service she has run 1,500,000 statute miles. She is one of the most travelled vessels on the seas.

THE finest complexions in the world are said to be in the Bermudas. This is accounted for by the fact that the inhabitants live chiefly on onions, of which they export over 17,000,000 pounds annually.

THE entire population of the globe is upwards of 1,400,000,000, of whom 35,214,000 die every year; 96,480 every day; 4,020 every hour; 67 every minute; and 1 and a fraction every second. On the other hand the births amount to 36,792,000 every year; 100,800 every day; 4,200 every hour; 70 every minute; and 1 and a fraction every second.

## GEMS.

GREAT griefs are dumb, and little cares very loud.

If good manners are not practised at home, but are allowed to lie by until occasion calls upon their wearer to assume them, they are sure to be a bad fit when donned.

It may be truly said that no man does any work perfectly who does not enjoy his work. Joy in one's work is the consummate tool without which the work may be done indeed but without its finest perfection.

NATURE is the true idealist. When she serves us best—when, on rare days, she speaks to the imagination—we feel that the huge heaven and earth are but a web drawn around us; that the light, skies, and mountains, are but the painted vicissitudes of the soul.

NOTHING has ever been done in this world which has contributed largely to the advancement of civilization that did not spring from an enlightened self-interest. At the base of every invention, and of every extension of commerce has been the desire of an individual to tower above his fellows.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

**BAKED HALIBUT.**—Scald a piece of halibut weighing four or five pounds. Scrape off the black skin. Wash, wipe, and rub with salt and pepper. Put it on a sheet in a baking-pan. Pour milk over it until half an inch deep. Bake one hour, basting often with the milk. Be sure to scrape the black skin off, else the fish will have a strong flavour. The oven must be quite hot. Basting with the milk gives the fish a rich flavour.

**STEAMED COFFEE PUDDING.**—Moisten well one quart of fine bread crumbs with strong coffee and add one cup of brown sugar, one tablespoonful of melted butter, three well-beaten eggs, and cup of raisins, seeded, and cut in half, a little ground cloves, mace and cinnamon, and one teaspoonful of soda, dissolved in a little water. Mix ingredients well together, and turn into a buttered pudding-dish. Steam one hour, and serve with a rich sauce.

**EGGS A LA NEWBURG.**—Hard-boil six eggs, throw them into cold water and remove the shells; cut the eggs into halves, arrange them on a heated dish, white side up. Put a tablespoonful of butter and one of flour into a sauce-pan; when melted add two-thirds of a cup of milk; when boiling take from the fire, add the well-beaten yolks of two eggs; bring to scalding point again and add a small teaspoonful of salt, a dash of red pepper, two tablespoonfuls of cherry. Pour over the eggs and serve at once.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

THERE are insects which pass several years in the preparatory states of existence, and finally, when perfect, live but a few hours.

THE green ants of Australia make nests by bending leaves together and uniting them with a kind of natural glue. Hundreds have been seen on one leaf drawing it to the ground, while an equal number waited to receive, hold, and fasten it.

THE jelly fish has no teeth, but uses himself just as if he were a piece of paper when he is hungry, getting his food, and then wrapping himself about it. The starfish, on the contrary, turns himself inside out and wraps his food around him, and stays that way until he has had enough.

THE ancient Egyptians believed that the spirit of their greatest god, Osiris, dwelt among them in the form of a pure white bull marked by a certain sign. Herodotus mentions two of these signs—a black eagle on the back, and a black forehead with a square of white in its centre. These creatures, when found, were worshipped during life and mummified after death.

RABBIT-SKINS are now made to look like seal-skins. The process of preparation is the following:—The rabbits are caught alive, their fur shaved evenly all over, and the animals set free again. This operation is repeated at intervals for a considerable time. Then the rabbit is killed, and its skin dried and treated exactly as seal-skin. The result is the shining fur.

IT is a common experience amongst mountain climbers to find butterflies lying frozen on the snow, and so brittle that they break unless they are very carefully handled. Such frozen butterflies on being taken to a warmer climate recover themselves and fly away. Six species of butterflies have been found within a few hundred miles of the North Pole.

ON any special festive occasion a Chinese host sends out three separate invitations to his guests. The first is dispatched a couple of days before the banquet; the second on the day itself, to remind the friends they are expected without fail; and the third, about an hour before sitting down to table, by way of showing how anxiously the visitors are awaited.

MILITARY experts are at present interested in a new self-moving car, which is to be a veritable carriage of death. It is to be driven by a 16-horse power engine at the rate of over forty miles an hour over a country reasonably level. The climax and purpose of this remarkable machine is to carry two rapid-firing cannon. One man only is needed to run this terrible wheeled weapon of war, and this same man also attends to the firing and loading.

ONE day two men, one of whom was very deaf, were walking by the railway. Suddenly an express train rushed by, and as it passed the engine emitted a shriek that seemed to rend the very sky. The hearing man's ears were well-nigh split, but the deaf man struck an ecstatic attitude; then turning to his suffering friend, he said, with a pained smile: "That's the first robin I've heard this spring."

SO much has been said about the Bauer process of retting flax that tests have been made to determine the relative value of this and the old-fashioned hand process. It is claimed that while the Bauer methods give a larger percentage of finished fibres, it lacks the gloss and beautiful softness of that prepared by hand. Of course, for many purposes the Bauer method will give very satisfactory results, but for the finer grades of linen, where quality is the important point, a certain amount of hand-prepared fibre must be depended on until the process is further perfected. Flax grown in various localities was selected for the experiment, and portions of it were sent to other places to be finished. The figures give sixty-two to sixty-four per cent. for the machinery-dressed flax, and that done by hand labour about fifty-three to fifty-six per cent.



## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**A. H.**—It rests entirely with the court.

**ALMA.**—Your best course would be to advertise.

**INQUIRY.**—Exmouth is a Devonshire watering-place.

**ANXIOUS.**—You must appear in answer to the summons.

**O. G.**—The Edgware-road begins almost opposite the Marble Arch.

**R. V.**—The height of the Queen, we believe, is five feet two inches.

**R. R.**—You can make a deed of gift, but it should be drawn up by a lawyer.

**H. K.**—You would have a difficulty in proving ownership after twenty years.

**DOUBTFUL.**—Cannot be done without serious risk of permanent disfigurement.

**SWELL.**—The best complexion rouge is live regularly, eat regularly, sleep regularly.

**C. K.**—The most satisfactory and preservative liquid to use for the purpose is milk.

**CONSTANT READER.**—The oil is best removed with benzine slightly diluted with water.

**TRAVELLER.**—The father of an illegitimate child cannot take it from the mother against her will.

**EDMAN.**—The London office of the British South Africa Company is at 10, St. William's-lane.

**QUERENT.**—It is against both Church and civil law in Scotland for a man to marry his aunt (in law).

**X. Y.**—London contains a sixth part of the population of England, 4,231,113; Scotland, 4,035,647.

**A. B.**—We should imagine that some popular resort on the south coast would best suit your purpose.

**V. R.**—In old times women's saddles were made without horns, but with a high pommel to hold on to.

**HUGH.**—Usually the bride's parents pay for cards and bouquets, but sometimes the bridegroom does so.

**PUZZLED.**—Q is the letter O with a tail. Hence its name, which comes from the French *queue*, a tail.

**ARNOLD.**—Five or six miles is the maximum distance a shot or shell can be thrown by a modern cannon.

**ON GRAND.**—We think you are quite justified in keeping all such designing people at their distance.

**INTERVIEWED.**—They need some practice to turn out, but once you learn the way they are easy enough.

**BETTY.**—One way is to use ordinary whitening and sweet oil and rub the handles persistently until they are improved.

**OLD SUBSCRIBER.**—If your engagement was for a month's notice then the notice given must be a clear month.

**FOSTERED.**—These sort of people should be given plainly to understand that they are not welcome at all times and under all circumstances.

**ROSE.**—Sprinkle each case with camphor gum, then if the silver is put away in a closed box it will not become discoloured.

**REGULAR READER.**—A very weak solution of oxalic acid and water is about the best leather cleaner you can have.

**RANDOLPH.**—The apprentice must continue at work until the indentures are cancelled or expire in regular fashion.

**TERMINANT.**—"R.I." stands for "Regina Imperatrix," Queen, Empress. "V.R." represents "Victoria Regina."

**MILLY.**—Any dishes in which flour and eggs have been used, are more easily cleaned if placed in cold water after using.

**HARVAT.**—You had better write to the office of the Agent-General for Cape Colony, 112, Victoria-street, London, S.W.

**RICARDO.**—They are sometimes formed at night by the moonlight; but they are not so bright as those seen in the daytime.

**THIRD.**—Removal of hair by means of the electric needle is not really painful, but we do not know of any reliable specialist.

**R. W.**—As a rule amateurs had better buy their varnish ready made; it may always be had of good quality if you go to a respectable dealer.

**DISTRACTED.**—You can buy off the young man for £10 within three months of his enlistment; see the officer of the depot to which he was removed.

**DISTRESSED.**—Sponge first with tepid then with cold water; perspiration is a result of weakness; tendency to it will be seen as your health improves.

**GEORGE.**—Young doves and pigeons are fed with a sort of pap secreted by the parent bird. It is necessary to their existence. They die without it.

**MONTROSE.**—Gaelic was really the language of literature in both Britain and Ireland long before either Scotch or English came into use; Latin preceded the Gaelic.

**VERE.**—A soft action in a piano is preferable to a hard one. Something of course depends upon the physical power of the performer to develop its full capacity.

**CHEST.**—For binding up cuts and wounds always use linen, not cotton, as the fibres of cotton are flat and apt to irritate a sore place, while those of linen are perfectly rounded.

**COURTIER.**—We presume you refer to those which open at the side if the rider be thrown. This lets the foot out at once, and saves the rider from being dragged on the ground in case the horse should run away.

**MARTIN.**—The ninety-third formed the "thin red line" at Balaklava, where they received and defeated, standing in two-man deep formation, a terrific charge of Russian cavalry.

**S. L.**—Your children are bound to support you if you are indigent and they have any superfluity, but your sons-in-law must contribute only in so far as they have got money with their wives.

**DORA.**—If you clean them well after use, and wipe them quite dry, and after that place them near the fire to let all moisture be removed, they will not rust, and will wear double or treble the ordinary time.

**SELF-CONTROL.**—The hands and arms must be kept under water, and the feet and hands kept in motion to sustain the head out of water. So long as the mouth and nostrils do not get submerged, there is no danger.

**INQUIRY.**—A first-class education in mathematics is indispensable; for the rest, the same qualities that command success in other callings are also required; and these are faith in one's self-energy, determination and industry.

**SILVERKING.**—The letters P.M., which are used for afternoon, mean post meridian. Meridian means mid-day or noon, and post means after. A.M. stands for ante meridian, or before noon, which is usually contracted into forenoon.

## ONLY A WOMAN'S FACE.

Unto my life was given a gift of price and worth untold;  
No one may buy it, though his hands are full of gems and gold.  
It was only two loving eyes, only a swift, sweet smile,  
And two tender feet that walked with mine only a little while.

Only a woman's face,  
And a woman's faithful love;  
But oh! they make the world below  
Like to the world above.

Only a heart of gold, true as the stars are true,  
And a quiet voice, whose low, sweet tones no touch of anger knew;  
But I knew not till they were gone how dark the earth can be,  
For her slender hands held all life's store of happiness for me.

Only a woman's face,  
And a love that was my own;  
But O, my life is desolate,  
For they from earth have flown.

**WRINGED.**—We think you attach too much importance to your disagreement with your fiancée. Unless he is very unlike most mortals he will soon be at your side again soliciting a renewal of the smiles which you have been wont to bestow upon him.

**LEONARD.**—An apprentice is bound to work reasonable hours, but those you mention are certainly long. Your master is bound to teach you his trade, and should not put you to other work; but you must be guided by the customs of the trade.

**O. G.**—The purser is clerk on the large trading steamers; there are no pursers in ships; the situation can be got only by application to the owners of vessels, and the salary may be anything from £5 to £10 monthly, according to the time you sell in.

**DUMOUR.**—Write to Secretary, Civil Service Commission, Cannon-row, Westminster, S.W., asking him to be good enough to send you the list of subjects, and date and place of next examination, which he will do gratis, then you can judge for yourself about fitness.

**HALFE.**—In event of a father dying intestate, leaving a widow who is stepmother to the four children surviving of a first marriage, she takes one third of the money and goods the deceased man possessed, and the children take the remaining two-thirds equally among them.

**AMIE.**—Four pounds gooseberries, four pounds sugar. Pick the stalks and stems from the gooseberries and wash them well. Put them on in a preserving pan with the sugar, half a pint of currant juice or water, and stir frequently till boiling. Allow them to boil for a quarter of an hour, then skim and fill into pots.

**E. L.**—What the wife ought to do is to make a will in favour of those whom she prefers, and let it take the chance of being effectual; the effect of the title to the property cannot be stated except by an expert who has seen the title, as everything depends on the exact words used.

**H. G.**—There is no practical difference between Scotch and English Episcopallians; the same liturgy is used by both, and the former accept the famous thirty-nine articles which the latter have to sign at ordination; but the Scotch Church is governed by its own bishops and Primus elected by the bishops, and its clergymen are forbidden to seek pulpits in England.

**PUZZLED.**—The doornail in earlier times was the plate of the door upon which the old-fashioned knockers struck to arouse the inmates of the house. As the plate or nail was struck many more times than any other nail it was assumed to be more dead than other nails. Hence the phrase, "Dead as a door-nail."

**AGUIE.**—Clean the fish and sprinkle the interior with brown sugar. Keep the fish in a horizontal position, so that the sugar may soak into it as much as possible. Half an ounce of sugar will be found enough for a three-pound fish. If fish is treated like this before salting and smoking, the flavour is much improved.

**INTERVIEWED.**—She should not make rules, but rather have the head of the house make them and do her best to see that they are lived up to. It will be imperatively necessary for her to be blind and deaf to many things, and above all never, as she values her position and her future welfare, to repeat to outsiders what transpires under her employer's roof.

**R. R.**—Strong vinegar and the gall of an ox mixed together and rubbed in the joints of a bedstead and cracks where the vermin lurk will kill them; or boil glue and vinegar together, rub as above, and that will destroy them; to prevent them coming again, take strong vinegar and mix with salt, then sprinkle the room with it; it will prevent both bugs and fleas, and is very wholesome in houses.

**HAIRER.**—Unless one understands the dispositions and temperaments it is not easy to give really valuable and appropriate advice. On general principles a young woman should not make her attentions too marked. Custom and prejudice are on the side of the girl who is pleasant to all men and devoted to none, until such time as the young man who is seeking a wife expresses his feelings and selects her as his prospective bride.

**R. M.**—William the Conqueror introduced what is called Troy weight into England from Troyes, a town in France. The English were dissatisfied with this weight, because the pound did not weigh so much as the one in use at that time in England. The avoirdupois was adopted as a medium between the French and ancient English weights. The term stone, as applied to weight, is fourteen pounds.

**SKELIN.**—Take some slices of bread, toast them, butter thickly, and cut into squares, and on each square put a quarter of a hard-boiled egg. Melt in a pan on the fire any pieces of dry, hard cheese you may have; season with a little salt, pepper, and mixed mustard. Pour this over the eggs, and brown before a clear fire. Serve hot. This is a good way to use up old pieces of cheese, which are too hard to be eaten in the ordinary way.

**NITA.**—Of course you know his ways better than we do, and can better judge of the probability of his seeking a reconciliation. It may be that your angry words at parting wounded his feelings more deeply than you have given us reason to believe, and that it may be necessary for you to take the first step leading to a "make up" between you. Love as a rule are very apt to magnify their quarrels and fancy them beyond the reach of an amicable settlement.

**WORKED.**—We can hardly say what is the ultimate effect would be as conditions and personal characteristics must influence that to a certain extent. You should try to stop it. A craving for sweets such as you possess, and the taking of it in excess is sufficient to derange your system, impair your digestion and appetite, and thus bring about the paleness which afflicts you. A physician could doubtless prescribe something to break you of the habit.

**HETTY.**—Soak half a pint of good small haricot beans in cold water over night. Then boil them for about three hours, with a large onion and a little butter in the water. When soft, mash till smooth with a spoon and pass all through a sieve. Season the mixture with pepper, salt, a little powdered mace, chopped parsley and one ounce of butter. Beat one egg and add to the above. Tie all in a floured cloth and boil steadily for half an hour. Turn out to serve, and sift brown bread crumbs over.

**INTERVIEWED.**—A true poet is involuntarily a poet; his poetry bubbles from him as the murmuring brook from the hillside, and is not ground out as a business operation. We do not mean to say that a true poet may not be a prudent, thrifty man, but that he does not give play to his poetical faculties for the purpose of selling his wares. He writes poetry because his nature impels him thereto, and he takes delight therein; but after he has written it, and the manuscript lies before him as a material merchantable thing, he may be as sharp as a bargain in disposing of it as any purely business man.

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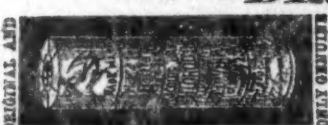
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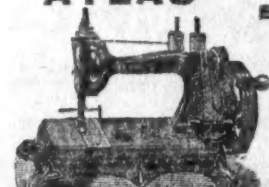
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